

K-TOWN

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

92

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K-TOWN'92

This Electronic Press Kit is intended for use by journalists and other publishers to support their coverage of K-TOWN'92 and the issues that it presents. Use for other purposes requires written permission from LeeLee Films, Inc.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT



Most of the country experienced the LA Riots — also known as the Rodney King Riots, the LA rebellion, civil unrest, Sa-i-gu — through an endless loop of chaos on the nightly news: protesters, burning buildings, looters, mob violence, and armed store owners firing into crowds on the street and from rooftops.

Beamed internationally, the news footage kept to a simple script: African Americans fueled a level of violence that was too dangerous for police intervention. TV news focused almost exclusively on blacks and Latinos plundering through busted up shops in a party-like atmosphere. Korean immigrants were presented as alien aggressors with guns and long rifles who put their stores ahead of people's lives. And though there were white looters too, the coverage focused on the near-fatal beating of Reginald Denny, who was pulled from his truck at the intersection of Florence and Normandie. Media representation of the “first multicultural riots” locked each group within its designated social construct.

Although looting and fires broke out from Hollywood to as far south as Long Beach, this project will focus on one neighborhood that often gets overlooked: Koreatown. Centrally located a few miles west of downtown Los Angeles, Koreatown is a place full of contradictions — simultaneously designated a high-poverty “Promise Zone” by President Obama yet also touted in a New York Times 2016 feature as a tourist destination.

With a population of around 125,000, most of its residents aren't even Korean, but immigrants from Central America, Mexico, Bangladesh, and transplants from all over the U.S. in search of affordable rents. But how many of Koreatown's current residents know what happened here in April 1992? How far has the neighborhood, the city, and the country come since the biggest civil unrest in American history? More importantly, what does it tell us about our future as a multiethnic society that is increasingly informed by the immigrant experience?

SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK.COM/KTOWN92DOC/



INSTAGRAM.COM/KTOWN92DOC/



TWITTER.COM/KTOWN92DOC

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

VERY SHORT (60 WORDS)

K-TOWN'92 is an interactive documentary for the web that explores the 1992 Los Angeles Riots through the lens of greater Koreatown. With a mix of archival news footage, all new interviews, and other media, **K-TOWN'92** will invite users to create their own unique documentary experience and to hear poignant stories that were overlooked by the media coverage of the day.

SHORT (90 WORDS)

K-TOWN'92 is a groundbreaking interactive documentary for the web that explores the 1992 Los Angeles Riots through the lens of greater Koreatown. With a mix of archival news footage, all new interviews, and other media, **K-TOWN'92** will invite users to create their own unique documentary experience inside an immersive website that puts the viewer in control of the story. **K-TOWN'92** presents poignant new stories that were overlooked by the media coverage of the day, and inspires a new dialogue across communities about one of L.A.'s most significant moments of civil unrest.

FULL DESCRIPTION (130 WORDS)

K-TOWN'92 is a groundbreaking interactive documentary for the web that explores the 1992 Los Angeles Riots through the lens of the greater Koreatown community. With a mix of archival news footage, all new interviews, and other media, **K-TOWN'92** will invite users to create their own unique documentary experience inside an immersive website that puts the viewer in control of the unfolding drama. Peabody award-winning filmmaker Grace Lee invites participants to reflect on an event that many would rather see disappear, and to explore how 1992 pushed many immigrant communities to reconsider their own place in the larger society. **K-TOWN'92** presents poignant new stories that were overlooked by the media coverage of the day, and inspires a new dialogue across communities about one of L.A.'s most significant moments of civil unrest.

LOGOS & KEY ART
STILL PHOTOS
(cleared for promotional use)



PROJECT LOGO



ANGELA OH



AUREA MONTES-RODRIGUEZ



ALAN NAKAGAWA



HUGO GARCIA



ANNETTA WELLS



BRENDA STEVENSON



TAMMERLIN DRUMMOND
& JOHN LEE



CREW SHOT (L-R): EURIE CHUNG,
VERONICA LOPEZ, GRACE LEE &
JERRY HENRY

ABOUT THE MAKERS

GRACE LEE *Director*

Grace Lee is a Los Angeles based Korean American filmmaker whose work explores questions of history, race, politics, and community. She directed the 2014 Peabody Award-winning *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs*, which The Hollywood Reporter called "an entertainingly revealing portrait of the power of a single individual to effect change," in addition to *The Grace Lee Project*, *Janeane From Des Moines*, Emmy-nominated *Makers: Women and Politics* and *Off the Menu: Asian America* (PBS). Lee was recently a Women at Sundance Fellow (2016), co-founded the Asian American Documentary Network and is a 2017 Chicken and Egg Breakthrough Filmmaker awardee. She is a current resident of Koreatown, Los Angeles.

EURIE CHUNG *Producer*

Eurie Chung is an independent producer focused on community-based documentaries. Her production credits include *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs*, PBS's *Off the Menu: Asian America* and *Life on Four Strings: Jake Shimabukuro*. Chung also manages a boutique post-production facility based in Los Angeles that provides services for feature films, including recently *The Circle*, *Tallulah*, and *City of Gold*.

WEB DOCUMENTARY CREATIVE TEAM

Folder Studio is a design studio founded in 2013 by Jon Gacnik, Takumi Akin, and Wesley Chou, creating visual identities, websites, publications and other printed and digital matter for cultural and commercial clients. Their clients include David Kordansky Gallery, David Lynch Foundation, Doug Aitken, Google Design, Machine Project, Morphosis Architects, Red Bull Music Academy, and UCLA Architecture & Urban Design.

ANDREA MELLER, *Consulting Producer*

Andrea Meller is a Chilean-American filmmaker based in Los Angeles. Her most recent documentary film, *Hotel USA*, about refugees' first night in America, will be distributed by the New York Times Op-Docs series and her prior film, *Now En Español*, which follows the Latina actresses who dub "Desperate Housewives" into Spanish for American audiences is currently broadcasting on PBS. She has co-directed the Emmy-nominated *Hard Road Home* (Independent Lens/PBS) and directed *156 Rivington* (Sundance Channel) about the artist-run, anarchist center ABC No Rio. Andrea is a fellow of the Film Independent Documentary Lab, the PBS and NALIP Producers Academies, and an alumna of Swarthmore College.

ABOUT THE MAKERS (continued)

JERRY HENRY, *Director of Photography*

Jerry Henry is a Los Angeles-based cinematographer whose visual talents can be seen in the Oscar nominated documentary *Exit Through The Gift Shop* (Dir: Banksy), Peabody award winning *American Revolutionary* (Dir: Grace Lee) and *City of Gold* (Dir: Laura Gabbert). He recently wrapped up the upcoming HBO docu-series *The Defiant Ones*, chronicling the life and work of Dr. Dre. & Jimmy Iovine and *Ferguson Rises* with director Mobolaji Olambiwannu. He continues to serve as cinematographer on numerous projects for VICELAND, MTV News, and National Geographic. Under his production company Cactus Eyelash, he shoots and produces for clients Ford, Reebok, Nike, Honda, and MasterCard.

ALDO VELASCO *Editor*

Aldo Velasco is a filmmaker, playwright, and editor. His short films have screened at the Sundance, SXSW, and Los Angeles Film Festivals, among others. Aldo edited the feature films *Janeane From Des Moines* (Dir. Grace Lee) and *Chittagong* (Dir. Bedabrata Pain).

He also edited the Field of Vision short doc, "Truth to Power," and was additional editor on *No Más Bebés* (ITVS, Dir. Renee Tajima-Peña). His science fiction shorts *Tent City* and *Excarcerated* were commissioned by ITVS for its FUTURESTATES series. Aldo is currently editing the upcoming documentary *The Infiltrators* for directors Alex Rivera & Cristina Ibarra.

KATHRYN LO *Executive Producer*

Kathryn Lo is a writer and producer of documentary and narrative content. Before going independent, she spent more than 10 years overseeing documentaries and series for PBS. She curated and oversaw *Independent Lens* and *P.O.V.*, two critically acclaimed showcases of documentaries and shorts, while also managing a 450-hour programming slate of lifestyle and public affairs programs. Prior to that, Lo produced one documentary short and co-produced two seasons of *Realidades*, a short documentary series exploring Latino culture in Southern California for national broadcast on PBS.

ABOUT THE SUBJECTS

SHORT FILM

Alongside the interactive documentary website, Lee's team has produced a short documentary (approx. 15 min.) that explores the prominent media coverage at the city's paper of record during the 1992 civil unrest. Hector Tobar, Tammerlin Drummond, and John Lee reported for the Los Angeles Times® during the riots. Twenty-five years later, they revisit their impressions of those tumultuous events and the media coverage they helped to create.

DOCUMENTARY WEBSITE

AUREA MONTES-RODRIGUEZ, a Compton resident and high school student walked home from school through her burning neighborhood when bus service was suspended during the civil unrest. A week later, she left LA for the first time to participate in a youth leadership event in Washington, D.C. and realized the outside world saw her community as criminals. Her experiences led her to work with the Community Coalition, an organization that works to empower Black and Brown communities in South LA.

TINA NIETO is the area commanding officer of West Los Angeles and the first Hispanic female captain in the Los Angeles Police Department. A Southern California native, she was a young Venice Beach police officer called in to patrol the city in the wake of the civil unrest.

JIN HO LEE, currently the television, internet and business manager for Radio Korea Media Group, was a field reporter for Radio Korea in 1992. Having immigrated from South Korea in 1980, his first encounter with South LA was when he was assigned to cover Korean merchants in the area.

MOHAMED SANFAZ was born in Libya and came to the U.S. as an engineering student. During the 1980s, he began working as a parking lot security guard for a grocery store and now manages security and janitorial services for several large Koreatown grocery stores. In 1992, he led a team of mostly Latino and Middle Eastern men, to prevent his workplace from burning down.

Through a Nightline appearance in 1992, **ANGELA OH**, then a defense attorney, became the de facto spokesperson for the Korean American community. Today she is an attorney mediator for the Department of Fair Housing and Employment in Los Angeles as well as a practitioner and teacher of Zen meditation.

ANNETTA WELLS is the political director for SEIU Local 2015. As a South LA youth, she saw the beating of Reginald Denny from her school bus. The questions raised by the riots led her to become a youth activist and community organizer.

BACKGROUND

ON THE

1992

LOS ANGELES

RIOTS

The 1992 Los Angeles riots are considered to be the largest instance of urban civil unrest in American history. Sparked by a “not-guilty” verdict in the trial of four police officers who were captured on video severely beating Rodney King, the riots are broadly understood to reflect deeper social and economic tensions that intersect with race, immigration, and a history of aggressive policing in South Central LA.

FROM CNN.COM - [CNN.COM/2013/09/18/US/LOS-ANGELES-RIOTS-FAST-FACTS/](https://www.cnn.com/2013/09/18/US/LOS-ANGELES-RIOTS-FAST-FACTS/)

- The riots over five days in the spring of 1992 left more than 50 people dead, and more than 2,000 injured.
- The rioting destroyed or damaged over 1,000 buildings in the Los Angeles area. The estimated cost of the damages was over \$1 billion.
- More than 9,800 California National Guard troops were dispatched to restore order, along with 1,100 Marines and 600 Army soldiers
- Nearly 12,000 people were arrested, though not all the arrests were directly related to the rioting.

FROM LATIMES.COM - [TIMELINES.LATIMES.COM/LOS-ANGELES-RIOTS/](https://www.latimes.com/timelines/LATIMES.COM/LOS-ANGELES-RIOTS/)

The LA Times offers a day-by-day timeline of the most important events associated with the 1992 unrest, beginning with the police beating of Rodney King on March 3, 1991 and culminating with his death at 47 years old on June 17, 2012.

FROM WIKIPEDIA - [EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/1992_LOS_ANGELES_RIOTS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1992_Los_Angeles_riots)

“Many Korean-Americans in Los Angeles refer to the event as Sa-I-Cu, meaning “four-two-nine” in Korean, in reference to April 29, 1992, which was the day the riots started. The riots prompted various responses from Korean-Americans, including the formation of activist organizations such as the Association of Korean-American Victims, and increased efforts to build collaborative links with other ethnic groups...

With narrow media coverage, economic distress and a perceived political indifference, “[r]acial tensions had been simmering underneath the surface for several years.” Many African-Americans were angry toward a growing Korean merchant community in South Central Los Angeles earning a living in their communities, and felt disrespected and looked down on by many Korean merchants. Cultural differences and a language barrier further fueled tensions in an already fragile environment. With the acquittal of four LAPD officers in the Rodney King beating trial and the aftermath of the Soon Ja Du trial where she was sentenced to probation for killing Latasha Harlins, the Los Angeles riots ensued and much of the anger was directed at Koreans.”

K-TOWN '92 seeks to broaden portrayals of all ethnicities beyond the singular stories of the headline-driven news.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As a multi-platform digital media project, **K-TOWN'92** seeks to engage viewers and users in thoughtful discussion and reflection on one of the most poignant and significant moments of civil unrest in our country's history.

The 1992 LA Riots may recall other recent events in contemporary news, however, this civil unrest is distinct because of Los Angeles' unparalleled multicultural dynamics.

The result has been a dominant narrative of black and brown crime against largely white victims, while the often more subtle—and more revealing—intersections of Latinos, Korean Americans, African Americans and other community groups have been largely ignored.

K-TOWN'92 intends to stoke these critical and unresolved conversations in a Koreatown that is largely transformed from one seen on TV twenty-five years ago. Beyond the creation of media, **K-TOWN'92** will seek out and engage with an array of community partners, in and around Koreatown and beyond, to bring both the media and the conversation directly to the community that survived these events, including those who are too young to remember them.

- **PARTNERS:** **K-TOWN'92** is actively engaging with community organizations in Koreatown and beyond, to ensure that the broadest possible conversations result from **K-TOWN'92**'s media.
- **EVENTS:** **K-TOWN'92** will produce and partner on a series of community events hosted by locally-based partner organizations. Events will feature presentation of media, diverse activities and robust conversation.
- **MATERIALS:** **K-TOWN'92** will offer a unique community partner toolkit that will enable communities and organizations across Los Angeles—and the country—to work constructively with this powerful media project into the future.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

JustFilms
FORD FOUNDATION

 **CAAM**
STORIES TO LIGHT

 **CALIFORNIA
HUMANITIES**
A STATE OF OPEN MIND

Funding for **K-TOWN'92** has been provided by JustFilms/Ford Foundation;

California Humanities is proud to support Grace Lee's interactive web documentary **K-TOWN'92** through the California Documentary Project. By reframing the 1992 Los Angeles Riots through the lens of the Korean American community's experience, **K-TOWN'92** is going to offer new perspective on this not-too-distant history;

K-TOWN'92 is a presentation of the Center for Asian American Media with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting;

Additional support was provided by Latino Public Broadcasting and the National Black Programming Consortium with funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.