

# UC Berkeley

## The 150 Women Project - Holding Series

### Title

Celebrating the Women of Optometry

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8kh404xq>

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### Publication Date

2024-04-29

# Celebrating the Women of Optometry

Eric Crapo, Compiler

The 2020-2021 academic year marked the 150th anniversary of the UC Regents' unanimous approval of a resolution by Regent Samuel F. Butterworth: "That young ladies be admitted into the University on equal terms in all respects with young men." The first women were admitted in 1872, and Rosa Scrivner became the first woman to graduate in 1874 with a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture. Since then, countless women have graduated from UC Berkeley. Staff, faculty, and affiliates have made invaluable contributions to our campus and the world beyond. Berkeley Optometry joins this celebration by honoring the women who have shaped our school, and the field of optometry and vision science. We are featuring an initial group of six of the remarkable women from our community, and will continue to add more in the near future.

## Jennie Chai Louie Mew, BS '31

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Dr. Jennie Chai Louie Mew, Class of 1931, was the first woman, first Asian woman, and youngest graduate to earn a degree from Berkeley Optometry.

Graduating just before her 20th birthday, Dr. Louie received an exemption from the State of California to practice before the age of 21, and continued to practice for 50 years in San Francisco's Chinatown as Dr. J. C. Louie before retiring in the early 1980's. Her legacy at Berkeley Optometry includes several family members who also served the profession and community: brother-in-law Dr. Harold Jew, Class of 1927, brother Dr. King Chew Louie, Class of 1934, son Dr. Arey Mew, Class of 1971, nephew-in-law Dr.

Jeffrey Ko, Class of 1973, distant cousin Dr. Sharon Joe, Class of 1990 and her husband Dr. Greg Hom, Class of 1991, and niece Harriet Fong, former Executive Director of the Optometry Alumni Association. Dr. Louie's identity as an optometrist and Berkeley Optometry alumna never waned even after retiring from practice, and in 2001 she attended the Optometry graduation as part of her 70th Reunion celebration. Her daughter Sylme Ho says returning to campus with her colleagues and community was "food for her soul." Dr. Louie passed away in 2002.

## **Karen L. Walker-Brandreth, OD '68**

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Dr. Walker-Brandreth is widely recognized as one of the most influential clinical instructors in the history of Berkeley Optometry, and is the first woman to be elected to the Berkeley Optometry Hall of Fame.

Walker-Brandreth taught more than 25 didactic courses on ocular and systemic disease, ocular pharmacology, and clinical examination of the visual system, as well as grand rounds and seminars. One of her signature contributions is "Color Code of the Retina," an innovative system for diagnosing retinal pathology. Dr. Walker-Brandreth has been a role model and mentor to generations of students and optometrists, acknowledged for her commitment and innovative teaching and for her transformative role in the growth of optometry into a respected member among the health care professions. She continues her educational mission today with online Berkeley lectures in glaucoma certification.

Professor Walker-Brandreth received her OD in 1968 from the UC Berkeley School of Optometry. She joined the Berkeley faculty part-time as a Clinical Instructor (Ocular Pathology Clinic and general/ocular pathology) in 1977 and was appointed Assistant Clinical Professor and Director of Ocular Diagnosis Clinics in 1979. She was promoted to Associate Clinical Professor in 1983 and Clinical Professor in 1998. Since 2002 she has been Clinical Professor Emerita at the University of California, Berkeley School of Optometry.

## **Gunilla Haegerström-Portnoy, OD '72 & PhD '83**

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Haegerström-Portnoy, professor of Optometry and Vision Science, is the first woman to be Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Berkeley Optometry.

Professor Haegerström-Portnoy has been one of a minority of full-time faculty with OD-PhDs at Berkeley Optometry who have conducted research while also working and teaching didactically and in the clinics. Dr. Haegerström-Portnoy has taught clinically in the Berkeley binocular vision clinic and in the Berkeley Special Visual Assessment Clinic which specializes in visual assessment techniques for the visually handicapped children. Too often, severely handicapped children had not been given the eye care they deserved, especially in cases where it was difficult to determine just what the child could see and how badly vision had been compromised. Her didactic teaching has been in the area of strabismus diagnosis and management for OD students but she also has taught the basic science of color vision to Vision Science PhD students for many years.

Dr. Haegerström-Portnoy has served as Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for 29 years, an exceptional record of service, in addition to her exemplary research and teaching career. Indeed, Haegerström-Portnoy has won school, state association and national teaching awards. Areas of research include studies on the chromatic organization of the human parafoveal retina, mechanisms of visual loss with aging, and assessing rod monochromaticism. Most recently, she has continued to explore vision function and aging in relation to physical functional ability, development of refractive errors, low contrast vision function, face recognition in the elderly, and assessment of vision in children with cortical visual impairment.

### **Vicki L. Hughes, OD '78**

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Dr. Hughes is first woman elected president of the National Optometric Association. She is also the 2nd Black woman to graduate from Berkeley Optometry.

As past president of the National Optometric Association (NOA) — whose mission is to enhance the delivery, effectiveness and efficiency of eye and vision care services especially in the communities with little or no eye care presence — Dr. Hughes advocated an approach to eye care that treated the whole patient; from smoking cessation, to better food choices, mental health awareness and to increasing physical activities. The biggest threat, she says, is that, “The majority of this population of people have chronic illnesses that also need to be addressed. The “three silent killers”: hypertension, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy are some of the results of these chronic illnesses.”



Dr. Hughes attended the University of California Berkeley. She received her BS in physiological optics and OD degree in Optometry in 1978. She was the second Black woman to graduate from the University of California School of Optometry, Berkeley. She became an associate doctor and the first Black woman to practice in San Francisco specialized in orthokeratology, bio-feedback, syntonics light therapy, iridology, nutrition and vision therapy, which, back then was not a major part of the optometric curriculum. Now all these modes of optometry are infused in the college classes and in a normal practice. After being in private practice for a year and a half, she started working at Kaiser Permanente, where she was the first and only Black woman to practice at Kaiser Hayward and Union City, CA for thirty-nine years. She enjoyed the diversity of the patients and colleagues and made sure that her patients were given the best equity care.

### **Karla Zadnik, OD '82 & PhD '92**

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Glenn A. Fry Professor of Optometry and Physiological Optics Dean at The Ohio State University College of Optometry and Executive Dean for the Health Sciences College at The Ohio State University.

Karla Zadnik is the first woman dean of The Ohio State University College of Optometry, the first woman dean of a state/public school or college of optometry, and a prominent patient-oriented researcher in the field of optometry and vision science.

In addition to her role as the Dean of The Ohio State University College of Optometry, where she is also the Glenn A. Fry Professor of Optometry and Physiological Optics, Dr. Zadnik is a Distinguished Scholar, serves as the Executive Dean for the seven Health Science Colleges, and chairs the Biomedical Sciences Institutional Review Board. She is a past president of the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry and is a member of the National Board of Examiners in Optometry's Board of Directors.

### **Christina Wilmer, OD '96**

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Dr. Chris Wilmer is the first woman to hold the position of Director of Clinics and Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs at Berkeley Optometry.

To a generation of Berkeley Optometry students, Dr. Chris Wilmer is one of the most thoughtful teachers and determined mentors they have ever known. A former soccer player with a passion for coaching, she pushes students to be confident leaders as well as skilled and compassionate doctors. "The clinic provides our students the tools to realize their career dreams," she says. "My job is to tell them, 'I know you have the talent, you can do this.'" Wilmer is deeply committed to helping students solve problems and develop a lifelong pride in their profession. "I chose optometry because we help people see and we alleviate pain," she says. "There's nothing more gratifying than that."