

MOTION

BB

PUBLIC WORKS

Kent Wong, former director of the UCLA Labor Center from 1991-2023 and professor of labor studies and Asian American studies, died on October 8, 2025, leaving a legacy of lives and communities strengthened and unified through his tireless commitment to justice. As a fifth-generation Chinese American, Kent's heritage and experiences influenced his work to bring immigrant voices to the forefront of union strategy. After graduating from the People's College of Law in 1984, Kent became the first staff attorney for the Asian Pacific American Legal Center for Southern California—now known as Asian Americans Advancing Justice—where he developed programs to serve the needs of Asian American workers, later serving as staff attorney for SEIU Local 660.

Throughout his career, Kent played a pivotal role in creating multiple major equity-focused organizations. In 1992, he founded the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), AFL-CIO, the first and only national organization of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander workers. The following year, he founded the Tourism Industry Development Council, now the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE). In 1996, he co-founded Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE), an organization focused on economic justice and tenants' rights, and in 2000, he helped launch the United Association for Labor Education (UALE), uniting labor educators to promote labor education programs in schools across the U.S. and Canada.

In Kent's early advocacy, he recognized that the labor movement stretches beyond national borders, believing that global worker solidarity strengthened the movement. In 2007, Kent led a historic delegation of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor to China, forming the first-ever sister-city relations between a U.S. central labor council and the Shanghai and Beijing labor councils.

Kent was renowned across Los Angeles and the nation for his lifelong advocacy on labor and immigrant rights. Over his 32 years as director of the UCLA Labor Center—and, later, project director of labor and community partnerships—he transformed the center into a groundbreaking hub for research and leadership development supporting workers and immigrants. As a founding leader of the UCLA Labor Studies department, he anchored the major's popular introductory course, taught thousands of students over three decades, and developed and co-taught "Nonviolence and Social Movements" alongside his longtime mentor, the late civil rights icon Rev. James Lawson, Jr.

Under Kent's directorship, the UCLA Labor Center became a model of innovation and impact. He helped grow the organization, expanding staff from three to 42 staff members, and oversaw the development of the Re: Work research justice team, the Dream Resource Center, the Community Scholars policy research program, and the first-of-its-kind Los Angeles Black Worker Center.

In 2021, with the support of State Senator Maria Elena Durazo, Kent's advocacy secured \$15 million from the California state legislature to establish a permanent home for the UCLA Labor Center. The funding allowed the Center to purchase and renovate the MacArthur Park building it had rented for 19 years, a historic space once home to the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union and located within walking distance of more than 20 labor union offices. The building was later renamed in honor of Rev. James Lawson Jr..

A year later, Kent advanced his vision to build lasting infrastructure for labor research and education, leading the statewide expansion of the UCLA Labor Center's model to seven additional University of California campuses. He also championed its global impact by helping establish labor centers at three Mexican universities.

In his last two years as project director of labor and community partnerships, Kent continued to support the movement by bridging collaborations between the center and community partners. He helped facilitate a landmark nonviolence training for 1,400 people at the L.A. Convention Center on July 10, 2025, hosted by the LA County Federation of Labor. He supported the Senate Resolution 38, an effort to incorporate a nonviolence curriculum into

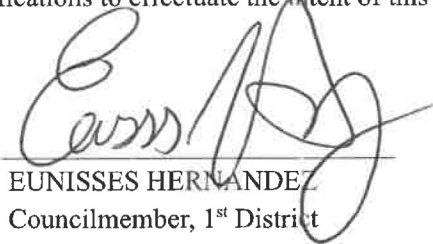
OCT 17 2025

California's public schools. He served as board chair for LAANE, a member of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Solidarity Council on Racial Equity (SCoRE), and vice president of the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), a role he held for more than 10 years.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council INSTRUCT the Department of Transportation to fabricate and install a permanent ceremonial sign designating the intersection of W. 7th St and S. Park View St, by the UCLA Labor Center in MacArthur Park, as "Kent Wong Square," on Saturday, November 15, 2025.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council AUTHORIZE the Department of Transportation to make technical corrections or clarifications to effectuate the intent of this motion.

PRESENTED BY:


EUNISSES HERNANDEZ
Councilmember, 1st District

SECONDED BY:



ORIGINAL