

Hello fellow evaluators! My name is Alysson Akiko Oakley. I am Japanese American, and was raised in Indonesia, Montreal, and California. I divide my time between evaluation practice, leading evaluation at Pact, an international development organization based in Washington, DC; and academia, where I teach evaluation at Georgetown University. I hold a PhD in political science. I am honored to be a candidate for the AEA Board.

AEA gave me a professional home. My life at AEA mirrors that of most members. I started as a junior evaluator, learning to present professionally and build a network. I have been honored to serve in leadership roles in two TIGs that represent my evaluation practice: the Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG) TIG and the International and Cross-Cultural Evaluation (ICCE) TIG. In addition, I have reviewed AEA conference proposals for more than a decade, and I currently co-edit the International Advances in Evaluation section of the *American Journal of Evaluation*. Like any good evaluator, I think about counterfactuals: I do not need a comparison group to know that I have genuinely benefited from this Association.

AEA was built to support evaluators, and our profession is facing real challenges. Like many AEA members, I work in a sector that has been contending with funding losses, political targeting, and questions about its own sustainability. These disruptions have had real consequences for the career prospects of both longstanding evaluators and emerging evaluators building their futures, and therefore for AEA as well.

AEA management, leadership, and volunteers have worked hard to meet these evolving needs, and I want to contribute to that work as a Board member.

AEA is strongest when members engage. Over the past year, I helped coordinate a group of TIG leaders to engage AEA management and leadership on issues affecting members and the TIGs that serve them. Through this collective action and advocacy, we developed proposals to better support evaluators facing disruption, promote cross-TIG collaboration, strengthen engagement in the annual conference, and conceptualize a forthcoming TIG Council.

That experience reinforced my belief that AEA members care deeply about the Association and want to contribute to its success. The challenge is creating meaningful opportunities for those perspectives to be shared constructively and incorporated into decision-making. As a Board member, I would work to strengthen those pathways so that longstanding and new members, TIGs, and emerging practitioners can contribute in ways that help the Association thrive.

My priorities are Association resilience and member engagement. If elected, I will focus on two priorities that are deeply interconnected. First, AEA's long-term resilience depends on its financial sustainability, and financial sustainability depends on attracting and retaining members. People remain members when they find genuine value in the Association as a place to learn, build relationships, advance their careers, and belong to a professional community.

For many members, that value is found in TIGs. This is why my second priority is supporting our TIGs. TIGs are where many members find their professional homes, cultivate expertise and leadership, and experience the sense of community that makes AEA worth returning to year after year. Strengthening TIGs strengthens AEA. I will work to ensure that TIGs are not only vibrant communities of practice but also meaningful contributors to the Association's direction by strengthening pathways for member input and ensuring that TIG expertise informs major Association decisions.

AEA gave me a professional home. **If elected, I want to help ensure that evaluators – whether students, practitioners, academics, or those entering the field from other pathways – have that same sense of home and possibility.**