

**#60 April 2021 Cameraderie**  
**Corky Lee (1947-2021)**



Young Kwok "Corky" Lee was a Chinese American photojournalist who died in late January this year from COVID-19 complications. I began to write about him because of his death. But due to recent elevated attention to mistreatment of Asian Americans, it is doubly important to recognize him and his mission to always include Asian Americans as part of America and America's photo legacy.

According to the Wikipedia summary, Lee "chronicled and explored the diversity and nuances of Asian American culture overlooked by mainstream media and made sure Asian American history was included as a part of American history."

You can see the full Wikipedia entry here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corky\\_Lee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corky_Lee)

As usual, you can see more of Lee's images by Googling "Corky Lee" and then selecting "Images."

Here is a collection of article links—all but the first are obituaries—all are interesting—all include Lee's photographs:

<https://photographicjustice.com/photo-gallery>

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/postscript/corky-lees-photographs-helped-generations-of-asian-americans-see-themselves>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/corky-lee-dead/2021/01/29/ba9ab1de-61b2-11eb-9430-e7c77b5b0297\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/corky-lee-dead/2021/01/29/ba9ab1de-61b2-11eb-9430-e7c77b5b0297_story.html)

<https://www.npr.org/2021/01/30/962357989/remembering-corky-lee-legendary-photographer-who-captured-asian-american-life>

<https://www.latimes.com/obituaries/story/2021-01-29/corky-lee-photographer-asian-american-dies>

<https://gothamist.com/arts-entertainment/corky-lee-nyc-photographer-who-made-sure-asian-americans-were-never-forgotten>

<https://www.vulture.com/article/corky-lee-photographer-obituary.html>

<https://www.boweryboogie.com/2021/02/for-beloved-photographer-corky-lee-a-funeral-procession-through-his-achievements-in-chinatown/>

Here are some of Lee's best-known images:

Peter Yew, beaten by police, 1975



From The New Yorker article cited above: In 1975, Lee took a picture of Peter Yew, a Chinese-American man, as he was being dragged away by the police, blood rushing down his face. They had beaten him after he had tried to stop them from assaulting a teen-ager who'd been involved in a minor traffic incident. The photo appeared on the front page of the *New York Post*, helping spark conversations throughout Chinatown between young and old, newcomers and longtime residents. A couple of weeks later, thousands of Chinatown residents took to the streets to protest a pattern of police brutality in their community.

Police Brutality Protest, NYC Chinatown, 1975



Lee was always on the streets, documenting protest activities.

Taken days after the terrorist attacks of 2001, a Sikh man is wrapped in an American flag.



This image shows Lee's support for other Asian minorities in America.

145<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad, Promontory Summit, Utah, 2014



One of Lee's most iconic images is this restaging of the trans-continental railroad meeting, substituting all Asian actor-workers for the exclusively white workers in the original image. This is an obvious statement that the railroads were built by Asian labor (although none of them were included in the original image—see below).

