UC SANTA BARBARA

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A Game Changer

Every once in a while a person comes along whose contribution to society is so huge it causes everyone to rethink how things could be done, from how we conduct our daily lives to how we solve our biggest problems.

The Asia Society calls these innovators “game changers,” and this year the cultural educational organization has recognized UC Santa Barbara professor and Nobel Prize winner Shuji Nakamura with one of its 2015 Game Changer awards.

“At the end of the day, it is important for me to know that I have in some way contributed to improving the lives of others,” said Nakamura, who is a professor of materials and of electrical and computer engineering. “As a co-awardee of the Asia Game Changer Award, I’m sharing the award with Professors Akasaki and Amano, it is rewarding and comforting to see just how far the invention of the blue LED has gone to drastically improve the quality of life for individuals in Asia and to aid Asia in reducing their electrical energy consumption, thereby indirectly reducing their contribution to climate change.”

The blue LED was, in many ways, the holy grail of energy efficiency. Since the invention of the light-emitting diode in the 1960s, engineers and inventors sought to complete the spectrum of colors emitted by the high-efficiency solid state lights to create a white light that could not only replace conventional technology, but also provide durable and cooler-burning bulbs.

With Nakamura’s invention of the *bright* blue LED — a feat of incredible persistence and problem-solving — it became possible not only to reduce energy consumption, but also to provide clean-burning lighting to people in less developed parts of the world who cannot rely on the electrical grid. Today the technology is ubiquitous, from TVs and cellphone displays to street and interior lighting. Nakamura shares this honor from the Asia Society with contemporary inventors of the blue LED, Isamu Akasaki and Hiroshi Amano.

The Asia Society’s Game Changer Award is the latest in a string of honors for Nakamura, who, along with Akasaki and Amano, won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2014. Nakamura is the recipient of numerous other awards and honors, including the Millennium Technology Prize, the Charles Stark Draper Prize, the Global Energy Prize, and an Emmy Award. He was also inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

The Game Changer Award will be presented to Nakamura on October 13, at an awards dinner at the United Nations in New York. Among this year’s other Asia Society Game Changer Award recipients are humanitarian boxing champion Manny Pacquiao from the Philippines; Indian-American comedian and actor Aasif Mandvi; female fighter pilot Mariam al-Mansouri from the United Arab Emirates; Chinese-Australian Li Cunxin, who is the artistic director of the Queensland Ballet. Chanda Kochhar, first female CEO of an Indan bank; and her compatriot Kiran Bir Sethi, founder of Design for Change are also among this year’s honorees.

Founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller 3rd, Asia Society is a nonpartisan, nonprofit educational organization “dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among peoples, leaders and institutions of Asia and the United States in a global context.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we

draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.