The Omar K. Carrion Scholarship for Asian Studies was established through a generous gift made by Hilda and Fernando Carrion, parents of Omar, as an endowment memorializing their son who passed away in 2013. This year we are awarding three outstanding students in our program.

**KYLE BEEKMAN**

Award Winner

Kyle is a 4.0 CPA student in the online Asian Studies BA degree, focusing primarily on Japanese language and history. He hopes to pursue an MA degree and eventually a PhD in Asian studies in order to become a college professor. In addition, Kyle plans on entering into the international Human Resources field, where he will be able to use his knowledge of East Asia in tandem with his background in business management. Before the pandemic, Kyle volunteered at his local high school as a soccer coach while also being a role model to students.

**BRITTANY NOBLES**

Runner-Up

Brittany is pursuing the online BA in Asian studies concentrating on Japan and maintaining a 4.0 CPA. Next spring, she plans to go to Kansai Gaidai University after being awarded the Gilman scholarship and a Freeman Asia scholarship to study abroad in Japan. She is currently completing a TEFL certification to teach English to students abroad, primarily those from East Asia, and hopes to apply to the JET Program after graduating next year. One of her future goals is to pursue a degree in film production to introduce people to different cultures, especially to share inspiring stories from Japan.

**TATIANNA VALIENTE**

Runner-Up

After Tatianna began studying Japanese at FIU, excelling with a 4.0 CPA in the Asian Studies BA with the Japanese Area Studies major, her passion for the culture has grown deeper. After learning Japanese, several opportunities have opened for her, such as being the lead singer in a J-Rock cover band called Kyoku 歌 and cultivating a new hobby, shodo, inspired by Mashav Sensei's calligraphy course. After graduation, she hopes to move to Japan to work as an English teacher through the JET program and offer private tutoring for Spanish. In the future, she hopes to take a leadership role in organizing and hosting multicultural music and art events, connecting Asian Studies to other parts of the globe.
FIU and Asian Studies Program alumnus Omar Kahil Carrion passed away on March 2, 2013, after he was the victim of a fatal car accident. Omar was a very bright and vibrant young man who majored in Asian Studies with a concentration in Japanese Studies. Omar was born January 28, 1985 in Miami, FL. He grew up in a tight-knit family with his mother, Hilda, father, Fernando, and his younger sister, Tatiana. He was a family guy, and had a great relationship with his parents, sister and extended family. He was always a happy child. His favorite hobbies were playing video games and playing outside with friends, especially baseball. His friends called him the “Number One Marlin’s Fan.”

Omar graduated high school in 2003 and immediately started classes at FIU. He grew a love for Japan and pursued his bachelor's in Asian Studies. He gained new friends and experiences, like teaching English to students in Japan. In the summer of 2005, Omar participated in a study abroad program to Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto.

He eventually graduated in 2007 and taught English to children in Kitakyūshū, Japan for a short time. Once he arrived back in Miami, he was hired by J. Silny and Associates as a Foreign Credential Advisor and degree evaluator, where he worked for five years. He was thankful for his career but longed for something that he was always passionate about: filmmaking. As a result, he decided to pursue his passion in filmmaking and started the production company “Phyxius Pictures” with two friends. While filming with Phyxius Pictures, he wrote, directed, and edited a few short films and an episode. Omar was loved and cherished by his family, friends and co-workers. Those who were blessed to have known him will always remember him for his wonderful smile and his boisterous laugh, as well as his love for films and Japan.

Unfortunately, his dream was short lived. On March 2, 2013, Omar, who was on his way to play baseball with friends at Tropical Park, was hit by a drunk/drugged driver. He was killed instantly. His family misses him every day, and as a way of honoring their son, the Carrion family has given a donation to FIU to provide a scholarship that will inspire others to pursue their dreams no matter the obstacles. Asian Studies alumna, Gabriela Romeu Izaguirre, who knew Omar for eight years and regarded him as a brother, dedicated her M.A. thesis, “The Japanese History Textbook Controversy Amid Post-War Sino-Japanese Relation,” to his memory: “I dedicate this work to my friend, Omar Carrion, who sadly and tragically left this world before I finished. I hope that your passion for Japan can live through me as you watch from the other side.”