

CALIFORNIA COMMISSION ON ASIAN AND  
PACIFIC ISLANDER AMERICAN AFFAIRS

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Dear Community,

The California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (CAPIAA) kicked off the year with strong momentum. In February, we passed a resolution to honor and commemorate Secretary Norman Mineta's leadership on American civil rights and social justice during our first public hearing of the year in Fresno, California. Additional community hearings were planned for Asian Americans and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month in May and throughout the year, however, the COVID-19 pandemic diminished our ability to do so. Nevertheless, we continued to hold virtual meetings and participated in the September policy summit organized by the API Legislative Caucus.



I am proud that 18 years after the state passed legislation authorizing the creation of the Commission, we now have a full-time executive director with support from the legislature and Governor. We could not be more thrilled that Nkauj lab Yang, a respected leader in the nonprofit sector and AAPI communities, is our inaugural director. Appointment of a full-time executive director enables the Commission to consistently serve the diverse populations of AAPI communities in California, especially residents in under-represented areas like the Central Valley and Inland Empire. It also enables us to more consistently draw on the voices of community organizations from around the state, especially of smaller nonprofits.

AAPIs are the fastest growing group in the state of California, representing one out of every seven residents in the state. CAPIAA has a responsibility to listen, serve, and take action. We will call upon you to work with us and strengthen disaggregated AAPI health and education data, integrate culturally and linguistically appropriate programs, and ensure that all communities have access to information, services, and resources so we can move towards recovery and healing.

We thank the following commissioners, Jihee Huh, John Ho Song, and Rachel Buenviaje for your time and commitment of service on CAPIAA during your terms. In the summer, we welcomed returning Commissioner Kirin Macapugay and two new commissioners, Janani Ramachandran and Lance Toma.

On behalf of the commission, I look forward to increasing our thought-partnership, collaboration, and collective action to meet the needs of the diverse AAPI communities of California.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Karthick Ramakrishnan". The signature is fluid and stylized, with the first name being more prominent.

**KARTHICK RAMAKRISHNAN**

*Commission Chair*

# ABOUT US

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**The mission** of the Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs is to elevate the political, economic, and social issues of Asians and Pacific Islanders (APIA) by contributing to and strengthening how state government addresses the needs, issues, and concerns of the diverse and complex Asian and Pacific Islander American communities.

## THE CHARGE OF THE COMMISSION ON ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER AMERICAN AFFAIRS



Advise the Governor and Legislature on how to respond most effectively to views, needs, and concerns of the state's APIA communities.



Assist the state in being an effective liaison and conducting outreach with APIA communities through information dissemination about APIA communities concerning public and private programs beneficial to their interests.



Examine issues of access and cultural language sensitivity by state agencies, departments, and commissions.



Provide assistance to policymakers and state agencies in identifying APIA communities' needs and issues and develop appropriate responses and programs.



Educate the public about hate crimes against APIA communities.



# 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

## SECRETARY NORMAN Y. MINETA RESOLUTION

On February 18, 2020 the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs passed a resolution to -



Honor the legacy of Secretary Norman Y. Mineta for trailblazing accomplishments to the AAPI community in California and to the United States of America, through his leadership in strengthening civil rights and liberty and for his service to our country, and;



Recognize the hardships and sacrifices that many Asian American, Pacific Islanders, and others, like Norman Y. Mineta, endured so that together we can pursue liberty, justice, and equality for all in the United States and around the world.

The resolution was presented during CCAPIAA's public hearing and received by Dianne Fukami and Debra Nakatomi, producers of the documentary Norman Mineta and his legacy: An American Story, and Mitch Maki, President and CEO of Go For Broke National Education Center, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the legacy and lessons of the Nisei World War II veterans.

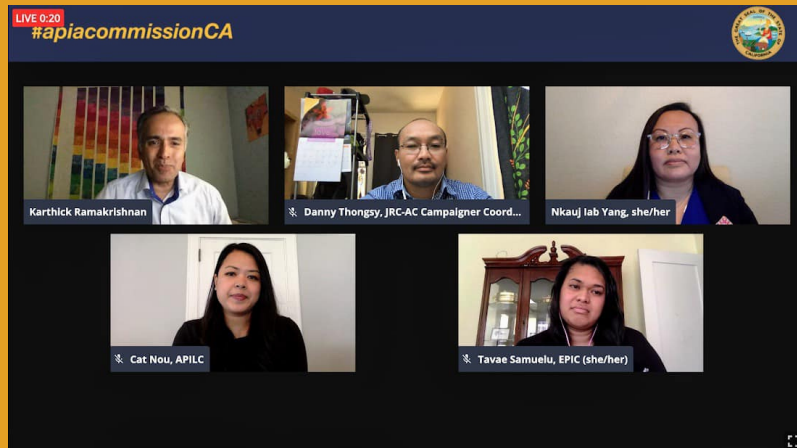
## PUBLIC HEARING

We held a public hearing in Fresno, California, on February 18, 2020, to hear Census outreach plans and the state of Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities in the Fresno and greater Central Valley. We heard from Ditas Katague, Director of California Complete Count about California's Census outreach and education plan. Naindeep Singh, Executive Director of Jakara Movement and Katie Moua, Fresno Lead Community Organizer of Hmong Innovating Politics (HIP) discussed their organizations' strategies on the ground to ensure a complete count of hard-to-count Asian and Pacific Islander American (APIA) communities in Fresno and throughout the Central Valley. Community leaders and advocates, including Dr. Ya-Shu Liang, professor at Alliant University and founding director of San Joaquin Valley API Mental Health Project, former Commissioner Blong Xiong, executive director of Asian Business Institute and Resource Center (ABIRC), Yi Varaxy Borromeo and Linda Kuma testified on the state of API communities in Fresno and the greater Central Valley.



"Testifying at the APIA Commission in February allowed me to share the meaningful work HIP and the Hmong community are doing together to uplift our stories, experiences and create visibility for our community. Transformation is felt through our stories and is seen when we have representation and it was empowering to share the faces and stories of the community members we work with."

- Katie Moua, HIP Lead Fresno Organizer



## FIRST-EVER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NKAUJ IAB YANG

On Monday, November 16, 2020, we sworn in our first-ever executive director, Nkauj Iab Yang. This is pivotal for the commission as Nkauj Iab will expand the reach and impact the commission is charged to achieve. Former Assemblymember George Nakano (D-Torrance) authored Assembly Bill (AB) 116 in 2002 to establish the commission along with members of the Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus (APILC). The commission became operational in 2004 and after eighteen years, this commission was able to hire on its first staff.

Nkauj Iab Yang received her Bachelors of Arts in Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley and pursued her Master of Arts in Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University in 2012. Nkauj Iab has over a decade of community organizing and policy advocacy experiences. Through organizations including Youth Together, Banteay Srei, Serve The People (Bay Area and Sacramento), Hmong Innovating Politics (HIP), Nkauj Iab has created brave spaces to organize and transform young people to realize their power to impact change. She served as the Director of California with the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) partnering with Southeast Asian led and serving organizations throughout California to advocate for access to services and resources and racial equity. This past year, Nkauj Iab was a co-director with HIP where she developed an infrastructure to organize Southeast Asian youth in Sacramento and Fresno and helped to oversee HIP's integrated Southeast Asian voter engagement work throughout California.

# LOOKING AHEAD

## ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY AND INCREASING ACCESS FOR APIA AND ALL COMMUNITIES

In the new year, and with the expanded capacity, we looking forward to the following activities -



Continuing our quarterly hearing and partnering with the APILC to conduct a statewide listening tour with an emphasis of uplifting APIA voices in the Central Valley and Inland Empire.



Engaging and building with APIA community-based organizations to elevate the diverse narratives and concerns of APIA communities, especially the most vulnerable populations.



Working closely with the legislature, Governor's office and state departments to strengthen disaggregated APIA data, integrate culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate program protocols, and increase access to services and resources.



Coalescing with all communities to address the public health concern of racism and its impact on all of our communities, including the increase of anti-Asian hate since the start of the pandemic and the exponential increase on mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

# FINANCE REPORT

In 2019, the CAPIAA was able to secure a budget of \$500,000 (on-going) and recently hired an executive director. CAPIAA will be working with the Department of General Services (DGS) to provide detailed financial and operational information.

## COMMISSIONERS

**Karthick Ramakrishnan, Chair**

*Professor of Public Policy and Political Science  
University of California, Riverside*

**Helen Lee, Vice Chair**

*Leadership roles in Human Resources  
Retired from Kaiser Permanente, City and County of Los Angeles*

**Christopher Punongbayan, Secretary**

*Executive Director  
California ChangeLawyers*

**Jihee Huh, Treasurer, Term Completed**

*Vice Chair  
Pacific American Fish Company*

**Catherine 'Ofa Mann**

*Founder and President  
To'utupu 'oe 'Otu Felenite Association (TOFA)*

**Cirian Villavicencio**

*Professor of Political Science  
San Joaquin Delta College*

**Janani Ramachandran, New**

*Housing and Employment Attorney  
Family Violence Appellate Project*

**Johng Ho Song, Term Completed**

*Executive Director  
Koreatown Youth Community Center*

**Kirin Macapugay, Returning**

*Assistant Professor  
San Diego Community College*

**Lance Toma, New**

*Chief Executive Officer  
San Francisco Community Health Center*

**Polly Low**

*Mayor Pro Tem  
City of Rosemead, California*

**Rachel Buenviaje, Term Completed**

*Brand Marketing  
Nike, Inc.*

**Rajan Gill**

*Professor of History  
Yuba College*

**Raymond Buenaventura**

*Citycouncil member  
Daly City, California*

**Simon Pang**

*Executive Vice President and Co-founder  
Royal Business Bank*

## STAFF

**Nkauj Iab Yang**  
Executive Director