



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COMMISSION ON
**ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER
AMERICAN AFFAIRS**



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The California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs Welcomes Supreme Court Decision Reaffirming Birthright Citizenship

The California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs (CAPIAA) welcomes the United States Supreme Court's reaffirmation that the Fourteenth Amendment guarantees birthright citizenship to children born in the United States, consistent with longstanding constitutional precedent.

The Court's decision preserves a constitutional guarantee that has been a cornerstone of American law for more than 125 years. While the ruling protects every child born in the United States and benefits all Americans, it also carries profound historical significance for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities.

The landmark 1898 *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* case established that children born on American soil are citizens under the Fourteenth Amendment, regardless of their parents' immigration status. Wong Kim Ark, born in San Francisco to Chinese immigrant parents, successfully challenged the federal government's attempt to deny his citizenship and secured a constitutional precedent that has protected generations of Americans for more than a century.

More than a century later, that same constitutional principle was defended before the Supreme Court by American Civil Liberties Union Deputy Legal Director Cecillia Wang, herself a birthright citizen born to Chinese immigrant parents. During oral arguments, Wang argued that the authors of the Fourteenth Amendment intentionally guaranteed citizenship to children born in the United States, not based on the status of their parents, but because every child born in this country deserves equal protection under the law.

Commissioners offered the following perspectives on the significance of the Court's decision and its implications for California's communities.

Commission Chair Jason Paguio reflected on the significance of the Court's decision for California's diverse communities and CAPIAA's mission.

"The Supreme Court's decision reaffirms one of the most enduring promises of our Constitution, that every child born in the United States is entitled to equal citizenship under the law. For generations of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander families, this principle has represented belonging, opportunity, and the ability

to fully participate in our democracy and economy. We welcome the Court's decision to uphold a constitutional protection that has strengthened our nation for more than a century."

Vice Chair Dr. Kirin Macapugay reflected on her own journey to citizenship and the importance of preserving pathways for future generations.

"When I entered the workforce at sixteen, I learned that I was not yet a United States citizen. Although my father had served in the United States Armed Forces, I ultimately completed the naturalization process myself after turning eighteen. Today, many community members face far greater barriers, even when following the legal process. Our hope is that the Court's ruling helps preserve and strengthen pathways to citizenship that keep our nation vibrant, welcoming, and strong."

Secretary Lance Toma spoke about the importance of constitutional certainty for families and communities.

"Strong, diverse, and inclusive communities are built on fairness, stability, and trust in our institutions. This decision reinforces the constitutional protections that provide certainty for families and strengthen our democracy for everyone. Every child born in our country deserves the opportunity to grow up knowing they truly and legally belong and have the same rights and responsibilities as every other American."

Commissioner Gene Kim highlighted the lasting contributions of AANHPI communities and the opportunities made possible through birthright citizenship.

"Generations of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders have shaped California into what it is today, from our economy and schools to our cultural and civic institutions, through the security and opportunity that birthright citizenship provides. The Supreme Court's ruling reaffirms that equal citizenship under the law remains one of the fundamental promises of our Constitution and preserves opportunities for future generations to contribute to California's future."

Commissioner Jason Tam emphasized the broader constitutional values affirmed by the Court's decision.

"Birthright citizenship reflects one of America's most enduring constitutional principles, that every child born on our soil begins life with equal dignity, equal protection, and equal opportunity under the law. California has long been strengthened by the diversity, resilience, and contributions of immigrant communities, and preserving birthright citizenship affirms our commitment to fairness, inclusion, and the rule of law.

As a Commissioner for the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs, I support maintaining this constitutional guarantee because it provides certainty for families, strengthens our communities, and upholds the promise that every child born here belongs and has the opportunity to contribute to the success of our state and nation."

Commissioner Zain Yahya reflected on the connection between birthright citizenship, civic participation, and community leadership.

"Representation is not just about being counted. It's about whether people are confident enough in their own status to put themselves forward to run a business, serve on a board, or speak up at a public meeting. As a small business owner stepping into this role, I know that confidence has to be earned and protected. Every time the courts uphold birthright citizenship, they protect it for the next person who decides to show up.

Representation only means something if the right to belong is never in question. Birthright citizenship has allowed generations of Asian American and Pacific Islander families to step into civic life, public service, and leadership with the full confidence that this country is theirs too. Today's ruling keeps that door open, and it falls on all of us to make sure our communities keep walking through it."

Commissioner Manju Kulkarni reflected on the historical significance of the Court's decision and its lasting impact.

"Today's Supreme Court decision is a victory for all Americans and a powerful reaffirmation of the promise enshrined in the Constitution that every child born in the United States is a citizen.

This ruling carries special significance for Asian Americans. In 1898, Chinese American Wong Kim Ark successfully challenged the government's attempt to deny his citizenship during an era of systematic anti-Asian exclusion. His landmark victory affirmed that the Constitution protects people born in the United States, regardless of their parents' immigration status or national origin.

Birthright citizenship has shaped America into the uniquely diverse and democratic nation it is today. Because of this right, communities of color have been able to grow in size and political power.

While we celebrate this historic decision, we must also recognize that challenges to birthright citizenship have created uncertainty and concern for many communities. We must continue working together to oppose policies and rhetoric that undermine equality, inclusion, and the constitutional protections that have helped make our nation stronger and more just."

Executive Director Khydeeja Alam emphasized that while the Court's ruling marks an important victory, CAPIAA remains committed to protecting civil rights, uplifting AANHPI communities, and ensuring every voice is represented.

"Our Commission believes every Californian deserves the opportunity to be seen, heard, and represented. While the Court's decision reaffirms an important constitutional guarantee, our work does not end here. CAPIAA remains committed to advancing equity, expanding civic participation, combating anti-Asian Hate, strengthening language access, and ensuring AANHPI communities continue to have a voice in the decisions that shape California. Through research, education, public policy, leadership development, and community partnerships, we will continue to stand alongside our communities and advocate for a more equitable future.

The story of birthright citizenship did not begin with today's ruling, nor does it end here. From Wong Kim Ark's landmark victory in 1898 to Cecilia Wang's defense of that same constitutional principle before the Supreme Court in 2026, generations of AANHPI leaders have helped preserve one of our nation's most enduring constitutional guarantees. While this decision reaffirms the

constitutional guarantee of equal citizenship under the law, CAPIAA recognizes that protecting civil rights, expanding opportunity, and ensuring every community has the ability to fully participate in civic life requires continued vigilance and partnership."

About CAPIAA

The California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs serves as the official state commission advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state agencies on issues affecting California's more than 7 million Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander residents. Through policy recommendations, community engagement, research, and public education, CAPIAA works to advance equity, increase civic participation, and improve the quality of life for AANHPI Californians throughout the state.



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