



CALIFORNIA ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 14, 2012

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California State Legislature Recognizes Asian & Pacific Islander American Heritage Month

Sacramento – The California State Assembly celebrated May as Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) Heritage Month today with the passing of Assembly Concurrent Resolution (ACR) 149, authored by Assemblymember Richard Pan (D – Sacramento). ACR 149 commends California’s Asian & Pacific Islander American community for their notable accomplishments and outstanding service to the state. Awards were presented to distinguished APIAs during a special floor ceremony dedicated to honoring leaders who have demonstrated excellence in the areas of public service, mental health, higher education, journalism, ethnic studies, culinary arts, and civil rights.

“APIA Heritage month serves as a time to honor APIA history and to acknowledge how APIAs continue to contribute to all segments of our society,” stated Assemblymember Richard Pan in his floor presentation, “This month’s commemoration of APIA Heritage Month serves as a reminder of the rich culture and diversity that makes our State great.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Asian American population grew by 45.6 percent from 2000 to 2010, making Asian Americans the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. The APIA community has grown not only in numbers but also in complexity and diversity. Currently, APIAs make up more than 5.5 million of California’s population, constituting 15.5% of the state’s population. The first APIAs came to California in the 1800s as independent miners and laborers. While the Irish were working on the Union Pacific track of the strategic Transcontinental Railroad, Chinese immigrants were hired to construct the Central Pacific track on the West Coast.

The impact of APIAs in the state continues to be evident through the accomplishments of the honorees as well as the presence of increasing APIA elected officials in state and local government. The 2012 Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Award Recipients include:

Ted Fang – Excellence in Public Service
Tania Israel – Excellence in Mental Health
Leroy Morishita – Excellence in Higher Education
Cora Oriel – Excellence in Journalism
Lois Takahashi – Excellence in Ethnic Studies
Martin Yan – Excellence in Culinary Arts
Khmer Girls in Action – Excellence in Civil Rights

“From the Nisei veterans who bravely fought in World War II to the Filipino farmworkers who helped establish the United Farm Workers, APIAs have made incredible contributions to this state and our nation,” commented Assemblymember Warren T. Furutani (D-South LA County), “Celebrating APIA Heritage Month also means investing in our future by fostering the next generation of APIA leaders who will continue to contribute to the success of California.”

The API Legislative Caucus was established in 2001 with the mission of representing and advocating for the interests of the diverse Asian and Pacific Islander communities throughout California. Additionally, the Caucus seeks to increase Asian Pacific Islander participation and representation in all levels of government. Assemblymember Warren T. Furutani and Assemblymember Mary Hayashi serve as chair and vice-chair, respectively, of the caucus.

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Asian & Pacific Islander American Heritage Month Award Honorees

Award for Excellence in Public Service

Ted Fang is a community activist, media executive, businessman, and student of diversity. Mr. Fang is an organizer of the Asian Heritage Street Celebration (AHSC), the largest gathering of Asians in America. The AHSC serves as a platform to bring together the diversity of Asians and Pacific Islanders in assembling community and identity. Mr. Fang is a co-founder and currently serves as a steering committee representative to the San Francisco Hep B Free campaign, the largest collaborative effort ever in the API community. The SF Hep B Free campaign is setting a national model for overcoming Hepatitis B disease by helping unite research, medical, and activist communities in fighting Hep B and serve as a unique advocacy model to engage the Asian American community in public policy. Mr. Fang is a founding member of the Asian American Journalists Association, New American Media, California Free Press Association, and the National Association of Asian American Publishers. He also has served as editor and publisher for AsianWeek, the San Francisco Examiner, and the Independent Newspaper Group.

Award for Excellence in Civil Rights

Khmer Girls in Action (KGA) was established with a mission to contribute to the movement for social, economic, and political justice by building a strong, progressive, and sustainable community institution led by young Southeast Asian women and girls. KGA's membership is predominantly comprised of Khmer young women and girls from Long Beach's emerging second generation Cambodian Americans. Through their Leadership Development, Learning to Impact for Empowerment, and Cultural Historic Arts programs, KGA provides holistic support to Khmer youth and provides tools to remove barriers low-income Cambodian refugees face in accessing services. KGA members most recently led the development and release of a report on barriers to the wellness of second generation Cambodian Americans living in Long Beach, approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of California, Los Angeles. In conjunction with this report, KGA members conducted the very first hearing on the state of Cambodian American youth. Among many campaigns to increase access to services and resource to the community, KGA is well known for working in coalition with fellow reproductive justice advocates on reproductive rights in California.

Award for Excellence in Mental Health

Tania Israel is an Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Professor Israel was the lead coordinator for the 2009 National Multicultural Conference and Summit, whose theme was "Advancing Our Communities: The Role of Social Justice in Multicultural Psychology." She is currently teaching a seminar focusing on social justice in counseling psychology and wants to develop a method in which psychologists and students can apply their skill set to advocacy, activism, organizing, research, and policy development. Currently, she is completing a five-year National Institute of Mental Health career development grant focusing on mental health services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals. In addition, she has set-up a series of forums with the LGBT Community Collaborative of the Central Coast.

Award for Excellence in Higher Education

Leroy Morishita is the fifth president of California State University, East Bay. He was appointed to the position in January 2012 by the CSU Board of Trustees after serving as Interim President in 2011. Prior to his appointment, President Morishita served as the Executive Vice President for the Administration of Finance and as the Chief Financial Officer at San Francisco State University. President Morishita has dedicated his career to advancing higher education and has more than 30 years of experience serving as both an educator and an administrator. His work has spanned a diverse range of areas from counseling and computer science to research and budget planning. In addition to his work with higher education, President Morishita is an active member of his community. Currently, he serves as a trustee of the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley. He was a former board member for the Japanese Cultural and Community Center for Northern California and was the former president and board member for Oakland's Asian Community Mental Health

Services. He has been a Commissioner of the Western Association for Senior Colleges and Universities since 2007, and chair of its Finance & Operations Committee since 2010.

Award for Excellence in Journalism

Cora Oriel established the Asian Journal Publications, Inc. in 1991 with her husband, Roger. From a small staff and humble beginnings, it has grown into one of the biggest Filipino American publishing firms in America with twice-a-week editions in Los Angeles and weekly editions in Northern California, Las Vegas, Orange County/ Inland Empire, and New York/ New Jersey. As the member of the Los Angeles Advisory Board of the New America Media (NAM), Ms. Oriel provides mentorship to promising journalism students during workshops and educational seminars held at local colleges and universities. She emphasizes the important role that ethnic media plays in helping to integrate immigrants and reshape the political landscape. For more than four years, Ms. Oriel has actively participated as a member of Search to Involve Pilipino Americans' Board of Directors. Ms. Oriel also offers her time and expertise to esteemed organizations such as the Pilipino American Bar Association Foundation, the Asian American Advertising Federation, and the LA Chamber of Commerce.

Award for Excellence in Ethnic Studies

Professor Lois Takahashi is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles. She holds a joint appointment in Asian American Studies. Professor Takahashi's research focuses on HIV prevention among Asians and Pacific Islanders, access to social services, and environmental governance. She is beginning work on the impacts of community violence on health and well-being for youth of color, and with colleagues in Social Welfare at UCLA, a project on the impact of realignment on social service systems, especially in terms of meeting needs for housing, employment, and physical and mental health. She has published two books and over fifty articles and book chapters on her varied research interests. Professor Takahashi is also Director of the University of California Asian American and Pacific Islander Multi-campus Research Program. The program connects University of California Asian American Studies Departments and Programs with local, state, and federal policy makers regarding the Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community.

Award for Excellence in Culinary Arts

Martin Yan is a certified Master Chef, highly respected food consultant, cooking instructor, and prolific author. His passion for food has found expression in a myriad of cooking shows and numerous cookbooks. Chef Yan was born in Guangzhou, China to a restaurateur father and a mother who operated a grocery store. His passion for cooking started at an early age and was formally introduced to the culinary world at age thirteen, with an apprenticeship at a popular Hong Kong restaurant. He refined his skills at the Overseas Institute of Cookery in Hong Kong, and later obtained a Master's Degree in Food Science at the University of California, Davis. Chef Yan is also a valued instructor at top culinary institutions and has taught at The Culinary Institute of America, Johnson & Wales University, The California Culinary Academy, and The Chinese Cuisine Institute in Hong Kong. He also founded the Yan Can Cooking School in California in 1985 and the Martin Yan Culinary Arts Center in Shenzhen, China in 2007. Chef Yan is a beloved television personality and has hosted over 3,000 cooking shows broadcast worldwide. In 1978, he pioneered a daily Chinese cooking show, "Yan Can Cook" which infused cooking lessons with his characteristic warmth, humor, and vitality.