



THE DRUM CIRCLE

A communicative gathering of people coming together into the light with their own natural human-beat

The L.A. County Asian American Employees Assoc. Newsletter



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Elections Work & Language Access
- Voices of LA AAPI Survey Results
- Call to Action for County leaders
- Redistricting LA Results
- AAPI Contributions: Sara Sadhwani
- County Leader: Genie Chough
- Mental Health Matters
- Fitting Into America
- Mapping Our Roots: Little Bronze Tokyo
- Champion of Change: Zora Neale Hurston
- Enacting Positive Social Change Through Art
- Small Business: Rose City Pizza

Leading By Example

Jodi Chen, Public Information Officer

The month of March is filled with juxtapositions between celebrations and reflections birthed by tragedies. It is in this month that we observe March 8th as International Women’s Day, celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women; yet at the same time across the globe, we watch brave Ukrainian women escaping with their young and their old or taking up arms fighting for their country. As we also commemorate the month of March as National Women’s History Month, we acknowledge the fact that throughout history, women have had to pay the ultimate price of wars waged by power-hungry men. I would be remiss to not mention that a year ago in March we experienced the horrific Atlanta spa shootings that led to the tragic deaths of eight AAPI women. It is always the mothers, grandmothers, wives, daughters, and sisters who will have to pick up the pieces of the shattered lives.

Although the Stop Asian hate movement have awakened the AAPI community to speak out against the hate crimes, we are still dealing with the fact that majority of the attacks against AAPI women are still occurring. We can’t talk about this issue only when another AAPI woman is brutally murdered. Whether or not it’s labeled a hate crime,

let’s face it, with 74% of AAPI women reporting to have experienced racism and/or discrimination this past year, the results are a sobering reminder on the current state of safety for AAPI women in the US (National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum). There needs to be a long-term commitment from the community and from those in positions of power to direct resources to address the issues that AAPI women face.



This month, united in diversity, LACAAEA came together with the men and women of the African American employees association, as well as the Hispanic Managers association to each recognize trailblazing women in county leadership who are paving the way for others. Our special honorees were Erika Anzoátegui, Alternate Public Defender, Genie Chough, Chief Deputy Director for Child Support Services Dept., and Cynthia McCoy-Miller, Senior Deputy Director for the Dept. of Children and Family Services. In their acceptance speeches, we were inspired through their own journeys and uplifted by their words of encouragement.



I also had the privilege this month to meet trailblazers like Honorable Lily Lee Chen, the first female Chinese American mayor in the nation, who advocated to improve her community through civic engagement. Lily understood the importance of voting rights for her minority community and worked with the Chinese Political Action Committee and the League of Women’s voters to create the bilingual voter registration handbook. She spent 27 years serving the county at the Dept. of Public Social Services and Dept. of Children and Family Services. Her experience in social work helped her see how ESL education is one way to break the poverty cycle by training a new workforce of women reentering the job market. After seeing many of the policy problems being implemented by the county and realizing that she was in no position to change them, Lily decided to put her first bid for Monterey Park city council and lost by 28 votes. She quickly experienced the ugliness of anti-immigrant resentment in politics where older White residents felt threatened by the “invasion” of Asians. Instead of requesting

(continue to page 4)

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Contributed by Michael Sanchez, Public Information Officer of Registrar Recorder County Clerk

Apply to be a County Election Worker

The Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk is looking for county employees who read, write, and speak a language other than English to serve as an Election Worker in the upcoming June 7th Statewide Direct Primary Election.

Serving as an Election Worker provides a unique learning experience and an opportunity to serve our community outside the traditional roles of service provided at the employees' current department. With the approval of the employee's supervisors, the employee would be reassigned to serve as an Election Worker in the upcoming election.

If you are a county employee and you are interested in applying please contact your supervisor or your department's Human Resources Division for more information on how to apply. More information on the County Election Worker Program can also be found on LAVOTE.GOV/CountyWorker.

Language Services for Voters

Los Angeles County is home to nearly 6 million registered voters across 3,100 square miles. It is the largest and most culturally diverse local voting jurisdiction in the United States. In Los Angeles County, the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk provides language support in 18 different languages.

If a voter prefers to receive their election materials in a language other than English, they can:

- Call (800) 815-2666, option 3
- Re-register to vote on LAVOTE.GOV
- Return the language request form attached to the Sample Ballot Book

More information on the multilingual services provided by the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk can be found on LAVOTE.GOV.

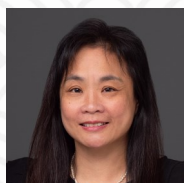
Leading by Example (cont.)

a recount, she congratulated her opponent and willingly returned every dollar that was contributed to her campaign, as it seems the community was not ready for their first Chinese American female mayor at the time. Subsequently in 1983, Lily won a seat by a landslide, and worked hard to designate Monterey Park as the All-American city, an award bestowed to cities that bring together residents, organizations, and government. For more on Lily's story, go [HERE](#).

As I ponder on what it means to lead by example, I reflect on my own journey of diversity, equity, and inclusion. I reflect on the progress we've made as AAPI women and the barriers we have yet to overcome. I want to create a future where the next generation can be bold and pursue their dreams and instill in them the idea that they each play a critical role in creating a culture where racial and gender equity is the norm.

The insurmountable difficult work cannot be achieved without the partnership of men and women who are empowering us and giving us the platform to speak in a system that marginalizes us and makes it challenging to break through the bamboo ceiling. Therefore, this month should not just be a recognition of women, it should also be a celebration of the men and women who are forging a pathway forward to shift mindsets and elicit cultural change.

On the 50th anniversary of LACAAEA, you'll find in this jam-packed issue filled with in-depth stories of female champions like Sara Sadhwani, Genie Chough, and Zora Neale Hurston. We call for action from our County leadership as we highlight results from a recent survey of 1,500 LA County AAPIs who are civically engaged and mobilized for social change due to the racial discrimination they endured. Lastly, as we return to "normalcy" from this pandemic, we are reminded that our mental health does matter and the arts can heal all wounds.



Jodi brings 30+ years of professional experience, with over 14 years in Los Angeles County. Not a stranger to the county, she has served in various departments, including Child Support Services, DCFS, Fire Department, Executive office of the Board of Supervisors and ISD. Apart from being a dependable and an executive strategic partner, she is also an award-winning Graphics Designer. She is now a Management Secretary for the Registrar Recorder/County Clerk.

As a Southern California native, Jodi immigrated from Taiwan with her family when as a young child. She is an adventurous foodie, enjoys trying out dishes from different cultures, and hopes to travel more after the pandemic. She is passionate about pursuing leadership excellence and all things related to diversity, equity, and inclusion across racial and gender lines as well as advocating for her adult son with special needs.

Welcome Our New Members

Adrian Li
Fire Dept.

Erick Kim
Sheriff's Dept.

Nykeah Parham
Non-County, Community Supporter

Carol Chung
Dept. of Mental Health

Jennifer Tran
Board of Supervisors

Peter Guan
Dept. of Public Social Services

David Louie
Dept. of Regional Planning

Joey Spraggins
Dept. of Public Social Services

Tara Parham
Dept. of Child Support Services

Duy-Tam Nguyen
Dept. of Public Health

Laura Cao
Non-County, Community Supporter

Walter Tucker IV
Superior Court

Voices of LA AAPI Survey

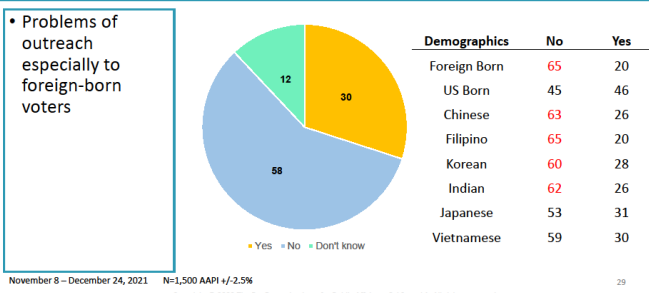
Survey results credit to Nathan Chan, PBI Research Associate

As LA County continue to undergo profound demographic, social, and generational changes, to help provide a sense of clarity and guide these discussions, Cal State LA and the Pat Brown Institute have undertaken a pathbreaking survey project that explores the social and political orientation of four major racial and ethnic groups in LA County (Asian American, Latino, African-American, and Jewish community). In this article, we will focus on their findings from interviewing 1,500 AAPI respondents living in LA County as it exists today. The knowledge that the results bring will hopefully guide the county as we head in the future.

Native-born and younger AAPIs more likely to report being victim of hate crimes. Many AAPIs across national origin have been victims due to their race and gender.

- Half of the AAPIs experienced racial discrimination. APIs most likely to face discrimination in the workplace, school, and grocery stores. AAPIs believe that Blacks and immigrants face the most discrimination.
- AAPIs have a strong sense of community and cohesiveness.

Few AAPI voters were outreached to



2. AAPI Politics and Policy Preferences

- Homelessness and coronavirus are most important AAPI issues. AAPIs support a ballot measure to aid the unhoused.
- 42% of respondents believe police funding should remain the same or increase. There are differences in views on police funding across national origin. 48% of Indian Americans and 50% of Chinese Americans most likely to favor status quo. Support for some increase in funding is among 37% of Korean Americans and 39% of Vietnamese Americans. A much smaller proportion support decrease in funding.
- AAPIs lean towards the Democratic Party. 50% of AAPIs lean Democratic, especially Indian, Japanese, Filipino, and Korean Americans. 35% of respondents identified as Independent or with neither party, with higher rates of Chinese and Vietnamese Americans.

PBI is a nonpartisan, presidentially chartered institute dedicated to the quest for social justice and equity, enlightened civic engagement, and an enhanced quality of life for all Californians.

<https://calstatela.patbrowninstitute.org>

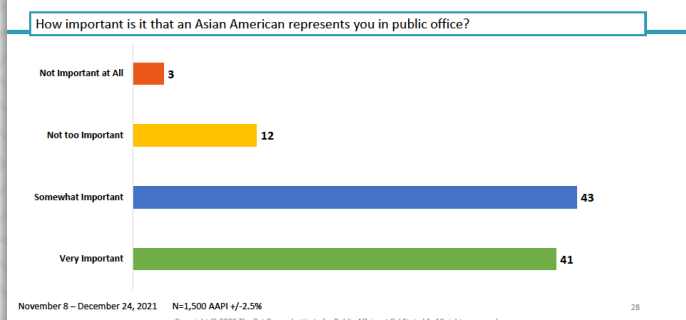
“The AAPI community has not been silent,” said Nathan Chan, who led this charge as an expert in AAPI public opinion and voting behavior. “The AAPI community has responded to racial discrimination with even more involvement in politics, making their voices heard. The era of COVID-19 and anti-Asian hate has the potential to usher in a contemporary wave of AAPI political activism.... For a community that often feels invisible in the political landscape, the data that we are seeing today really show a community worth of engagement... the problem here is that there is simply not enough investment put into talking and outreaching to our communities.”

Here are the key findings from the survey:

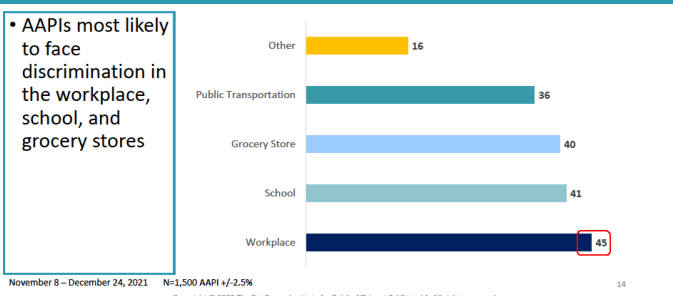
1. Anti-Asian Hate and Discrimination During COVID-19

- Pandemic hit AAPI community hard, especially among the 18-34-year-olds. 36% of all respondents had either lost their jobs or had their hours cut.
- 80% of AAPIs say that anti-Asian racism has been serious during the pandemic. Filipino, Vietnamese, and Japanese Americans most say anti-Asian racism has been serious.
- Two-thirds of AAPIs worry about hate crimes. Nearly a quarter of AAPIs reported being a victim of a hate crime during the pandemic.

Asian American representation matters



AAPIs face discrimination in everyday life



3. Voting and Civic Engagement

- Many AAPIs voted for the first time in gubernatorial recall election.
- 92% of respondents reported being enthusiastic about voting in the 2022 midterms. However, a few AAPI voters were reached out to with 58% of respondents saying they have not been contacted about registering to vote or voting in the last two years. 65% of respondents who are foreign-born reported not being contacted.
- Nearly 85% of AAPIs believe representation matters to them.

(continue to page 5)

Call to Action for County Leaders

Dear County leaders:

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) County of Los Angeles (County) employees have become a very sizable minority group in the County workforce; however, they rank low in the ratio of executive managers to AAPI County employees. According to data from the County of Los Angeles Workforce Demographics, AAPIs constitute almost 20% of the County workforce, but only 8% of the executive managers.

There is a perception that AAPIs are highly educated and do not lack the opportunities to become managers or executives, especially in areas such as health, nursing, accounting, law, and information technology. But the numbers demonstrate otherwise. Although AAPIs are highly regarded, they are often thought to be docile or lack leadership qualities and assertiveness. For example, Asian Americans are often portrayed as a model minority — well educated, hard-working, dedicated, and successful. For this reason, they are regularly left out of discussions about discrimination in the workplace and overlooked for opportunities that would give them experience to qualify for an executive or manager position. In fact, Asians are often excluded in diversity and inclusion plans entirely.

The model minority myth has even made Asian Americans invisible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

They are rarely mentioned by the media in economic impact reports, even though they have faced the sharpest increase in long-term unemployment. This is not surprising, since there is little understanding that 10% of Asian Americans live in poverty and that there is a huge disparity of education and income levels among AAPIs.

In recent years the County has focused on evaluating promotion opportunities through a racial equity lens to overcome the challenges qualified candidates of color face due to the intentional structuring of opportunity, implementation of policies and practices, and assignment of value based solely on skin color. It is important for organizations, including the government, to support diversity and inclusion that result in equity, so employees from diverse communities can be authentic, contribute fully, and enjoy the benefits of employment.

For the County to move closer to reflect the diversity of the communities it serves; County departments need to review hiring and promotion policies to promote equity and inclusiveness. The County will have to root out racial bias if they want to develop leaders who reflect an increasingly diverse employee and customer base.

As the AAPI community continues to grow in Los Angeles County, AAPI residents should be able to look to their AAPI County leaders, in all levels of government, for assistance, support and leadership. In addition, a diverse workforce can help the County benefit from the positive impacts it makes on County residents who engage with the County frequently for assistance, support, and leadership.

Department heads, executives and managers of all backgrounds should provide mentorship to all employees. As in every profession, the lack of mentors and contacts is a barrier to career advancement. Mentors from all backgrounds who take a continuous and concerted interest in the careers of AAPI employees, is what is needed. Mentors who are willing to use their work experience, their positions, their wisdom, their contacts, and their clout, to help AAPI employees, is what is needed.

Action Steps:

1. Start by assessing the diversity of your departments for future leadership and management roles. Your actions should create mentorship opportunities, provide leadership and management training to these individuals so they can successfully promote.
2. Track your diversity numbers and increase your diversity percentages in supervisory and mid-level management roles to align with the diversity of the County workforce more closely.
3. Sign up to join LACAAEA and participate in virtual workshops, speaker panels, or social events to share your experiences with County employees.

So, to start we are looking to you, the 8% of County AAPI executives and managers to shoulder the leadership of mentoring talented and qualified AAPI employees at the County. Start by assessing the diversity of your departments for future leadership and management roles. Your actions should create mentorship opportunities, provide leadership and management training to these individuals so they can successfully promote. Track your diversity numbers and increase your diversity percentages in

supervisory and mid-level management roles to align with the diversity of the County workforce more closely. And lastly, sign up to join LACAAEA and participate in virtual workshops, speaker panels, or social events to share your experiences with County employees.

Building the path to leadership for County employees of all backgrounds must be part of the unfinished work of the County. The time to act is now.

According to data from the county of Los Angeles Workforce Demographics, African American County employees are 19% of the County workforce and hold 21% of the executive management roles. Latinx County employees constitute 39% of the workforce and hold 24% of the executive management roles. Caucasians are 22% of the workforce and hold 45% of the executive management roles.

Kristin Stoller. "Asian American Workers Face Higher Long-Term Unemployment Rates Amid Pandemic." Forbes, March 19, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kristinstoller/2021/03/19/asian-american-workers-face-higher-long-term-unemployment-rates-amid-pandemic/?sh=eab905541bf7>

Abby Budiman and Neai G. Ruiz. "Key facts about Asian Americans, a diverse and growing population." Pew Research Center. April 29, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-americans/>.

Redistricting LA Results

Contributed by Jayson Chan

On December 15, 2021, the Los Angeles County Citizens Redistricting Commission (CRC) approved a map creating new lines for the five supervisorial districts. Regarding the AAPI community, the total population percentages increased in Districts 1, 2, and 3, while decreasing in Districts 4 and 5:

SD	Before	After	Change
1	15.3%	25.6%	+67.3%
2	8.7%	10.9%	+25.3%
3	9.9%	13.1%	+32.3%
4	15.2%	13.6%	-10.5%
5	18.3%	16.2%	-11.5%

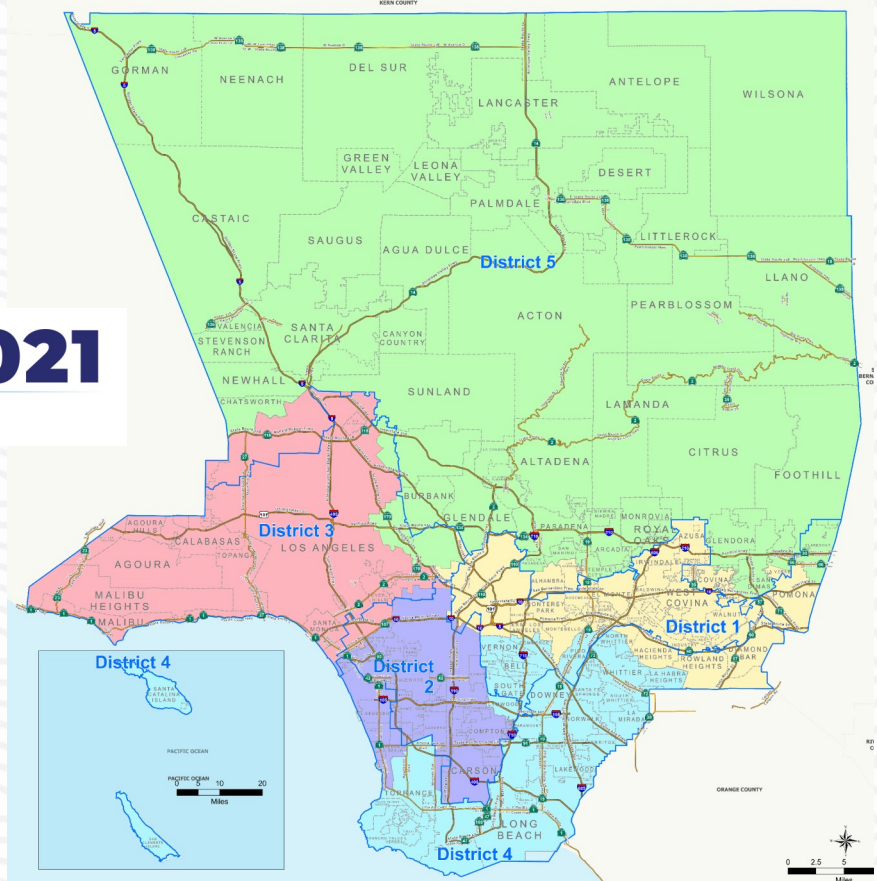
As part of the CRC's processes, they listened to public testimonies, forms, and letters from numerous stakeholders, and developed hypotheses based on communities of interest. One of the hypotheses was to "Keep San Gabriel Valley in one supervisorial district because it increases the opportunity for AAPI community to elect someone of their choice". This hypothesis included the cities of Arcadia, San Marino, and Temple City, which continues to remain part of District 5. However, District 1 was able gain

the cities of Alhambra, Diamond Bar, San Gabriel, Hacienda Heights, and Rowland Heights, which moved in from Districts 4 and 5. In addition to Los Angeles County's new lines, Los Angeles City Council voted to unify the Koreatown areas in a single council district, CD10.

The CRC's final report included 15 lessons learned, one of which is to consider increasing the number of County Supervisors/districts, allowing Supervisors to be more responsive and better address the concerns of smaller communities of interest. This consideration would require a ballot measure and legislative changes. In the meantime, will the redrawn districts allow the communities of interest to be fairly represented? If not, we will have another opportunity to redraw the lines after the 2030 Federal Census.

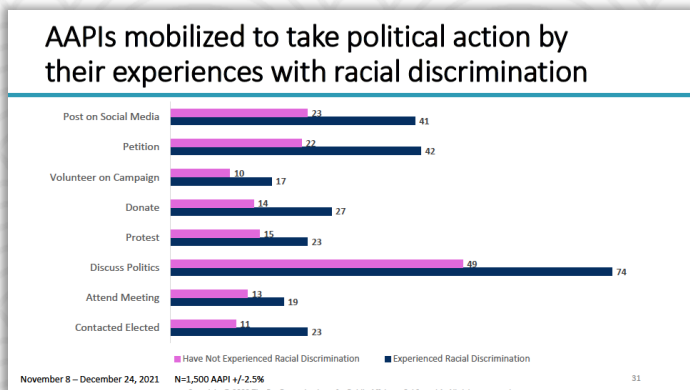


Jayson began his County career in 2004 as a Student Worker with the Superior Courts. He furthered his career at the Department of Auditor-Controller where he specialized in conducting IT audits across numerous County departments. He is currently with the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors under the Office of Inspector General. In his free time, he enjoys traveling, experiencing new foods, listening to music, relaxing outdoors, and learning new things.



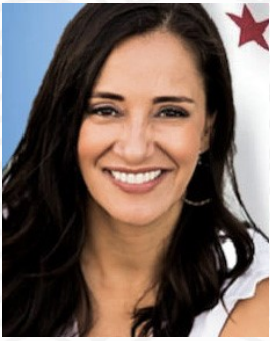
Voices of LA AAPI Survey (cont.)

(continue from page 3)



- AAPIs are actively engaged in politics in midst of hate and discrimination. They are more unified as a group, making their voice heard in many ways: discussing politics, petitioning, and posting on social media. AAPIs are mobilized to take political action due to their experiences with racial discrimination.

To view the entire survey results, go [HERE](#).



★ **AAPI Contribution:**

Sara Sadhwani

Contributed by Truc Moore

With March being Women's History Month and with the upcoming June and November elections around the corner, it's the perfect time to highlight an Asian American woman in Los Angeles County making great strides in this area. We'd like you to meet Professor Sara Sadhwani of La Canada --- a LA County resident, Assistant Professor of Politics at Pomona College specializing in American politics and race and ethnic politics, and most recently, a commissioner on the 2020 Citizens Redistricting Commission (CRC) for the State.

Professor Sadhwani was part of the 14-member independent Commission to redraw district lines within the state for Congress, the State Legislature and the Board of Equalization as part of the redistricting effort. Redistricting happens once every 10 years, after every census, to ensure that each district has the same amount of people. It's only the second time in California's history that redistricting was done by this independent Commission.

Following an exhaustive review of more than 20,000 applicants, Professor Sadhwani was selected as a member of the Commission, which was formed from five Democrats, five Republicans, and four unaffiliated Californians with a variety of backgrounds, and all from different parts of the state. With such a large number of qualified applicants, it was wonderful to see an Asian American woman of Indian descent be selected to participate on this important Commission.

The Commission spent 2021 drawing district maps in an open and transparent process that sought to maximize public input and participation through 196 public meetings, so that they could deliver on the voter goals of Propositions 11 and 20 in achieving effective and fair representation for all Californians. The Commission voted unanimously on December 20, 2022 to approve its final maps, with the new district maps being operative for the next decade starting with the upcoming June elections.

Professor Sadhwani notes, "I was surprised by the incredible individuals that I had the opportunity to serve with. Despite our differences in partisanship, race, gender, areas of the state, and perspectives of the world, we all had a deep commitment to ensuring a fair process and to develop maps that reflect the voices of communities on the ground, to the greatest extent possible. It was an honor to serve with such incredible Californians."

Review of the new redistricting maps adopted by the Commission, does show gains for the growing AAPI population of voters. There are now two majority AAPI districts, and 16 districts throughout the state where AAPIs make up 30% or more of eligible voters. Similar larger gains were also seen for Latinos in the Assembly, Senate and House districts.

Aside from her work on the Commission, Professor Sadhwani has done much research in the area of AAPI voting behavior and demographics. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Politics at Pomona College, a faculty fellow at the USC Schwarzenegger Institute (she earned her doctorate in political science from USC), and a Senior Researcher at AAPI Data, a nationally recognized publisher of demographic data and policy research on AAPI communities. Her research has been published in peer reviewed journals, including her piece on "Asian American Mobilization: The Effect of Candidates and Districts on Asian American Voting Behavior" published in *Political Behavior* in 2020. Her analysis of AAPI and Latino voting behavior in California elections has also been featured in the *Washington Post* and in *PS: Political Science and Politics*, where she argued that institutional innovations such as the California CRC led to increases in Latino and AAPI representation in the State Legislature and U.S. Congress. In addition, prior to teaching, Professor Sadhwani worked for nearly a decade advocating for the rights of immigrants at social justice organizations such as the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, Asian Americans Advancing Justice-LA, and the California Immigrant Policy Center.

"Despite significant growth and many advances, Asian American voters continue to be largely ignored by both political parties in many parts of the state. We see this reported year after year in survey data. Parties and candidates continue to view AAPIs as 'low propensity' voters and don't expend precious campaign resources to invest in AAPI participation. To elect more Asian Americans or to elect more individuals of any background who take seriously the needs of our communities, more people need to naturalize, register, and actively participate at the ballot box in each and every election."

Given her work and research in the AAPI area, we asked Professor Sadhwani to set aside her prior Commissioner hat and speak as an Asian American and political science professor on what she views as the greatest challenges in electing more AAPI candidates. Professor Sadhwani states that "Despite significant growth and many advances, Asian American voters continue to be largely ignored by both political parties in many parts of the state. We see this reported year after year in survey data. Parties and candidates continue to view AAPIs as 'low propensity' voters and don't expend precious campaign resources to invest in AAPI participation. To elect more Asian Americans or to elect more individuals of any background who take seriously the needs of our communities, more people need to naturalize, register, and actively participate at the ballot box in each and every election." We couldn't agree more with Professor Sadhwani!

For a copy of the final maps, please click [HERE](#).



Truc is a Principal Deputy County Counsel. She is an 18 year practicing attorney, and has been employed with the County for the last 14 years. She advises the County on information technology, intellectual property, contracting, procurement and government law matters. Truc is an avid traveler, foodie, cook and USC fan. In her free time, she is fond of traveling, trying out new restaurants, and spending time with her husband and kids. Check out her [Instagram page](#).

Meet a County Leader



Genie Chough
Chief Deputy Director,
Child Support Services

What advice would you give to someone starting out in LA County?

As an introvert, I was the kid who sat in the back of the class, hoping not to get called on. Early in my career, I went against my every instinct by speaking up in search of new opportunities. Once, after a big meeting, I followed an attendee to the elevator, handed her my business card, and sheepishly asked for an informational interview. Months later, I was working for her at the White House.

AAPIs make up 13% of working professionals in the nation, but as we move up the ladder, we occupy just 6% of leadership roles. Is that due to discrimination or media depictions? Collectively, are we left out of conversations or not jumping in enough? I don't know but we've got to try, right? The worst that can happen is they say "no." Go outside your comfort zone, take risks, make the ask.

What's the biggest factor that has helped you be successful in your career?

Being authentic and transparent. People can smell "fake" a mile away and either tune out or turn off. When you're real and you share and you listen, you build trust. And trust is so foundational in every relationship—whether your colleagues, your partner, or your dog. Strong relationships not only help you succeed but are also rewarding. Those positive connections are what make for a good day.

What are your success habits?

I'm very surprised at the impact my \$5 gratitude journal has had on my life. I take a minute every morning to set my intention for the day. I take a couple more minutes at the end of the day to reflect on what went well and what I learned. It's a way to be more mindful of priorities, learnings, and things that nourish or deplete me.

Whose career inspires you and why?

The top of that list is my mom, Hyon. She was a child during the Korean War, immigrated to a foreign country, and built her own business while raising a family. She found the intersection between what she loved and what she was good at, merging her love for art and design with her instinct for business to launch a career in the male-dominated furniture industry. I learn so much from watching her.

During the 1992 riots, I started to follow the attorney-activist, Angela Oh. It was so inspiring to see someone who looked like me in the public policy arena.

The latest addition to my list is Ketanji Jackson Brown. Not only is she a pioneer for women of color, but also for Public Defenders. She credits high school debate for success in law and life. My daughter is a debater and I hope she is inspired by

the SCOTUS nominee. Can you imagine the day when we have an AAPI on that bench?

How do you push through your worst times?

One of the best things about getting old is knowing that time heals most wounds. So when things are "pinch-me" good, I savor it, take it all in and hope it lasts as long as possible. And when things get rough, I talk it through with my husband and friends, find the lesson to be learned, and look forward to the day when the situation is a distant memory.

What mistakes have you made along the way? If you could start all over again, what would you do differently?

When I first transitioned into a leadership role, I made the mistake of being "too" authentic and showing my stress—not having the self-management skills to know that leaders need to remain cool under fire. Especially in the face of a crisis, an unflappable leader brings a sense of safety and reassurance to the whole team—ultimately bringing the best out of them when it's needed most.

Have you personally experienced any form of discrimination as an Asian American?

"Ching chong"
 "Slanty eyes"
 "Are you Chinese or Japanese?"
 "Do you eat rice all the time?"
 "Konichiwa!"
 "Go back to China — stop taking our jobs!"

These remarks made regular appearances throughout my childhood in the San Fernando Valley in the '80s. As a teenager waiting for a bus, a man hurled an orange at me, yelling at me to go back to my country. I learned to carry a defensive posture. Other times, I was simply annoyed that our Korean family would be seated at the restaurant table back by the bathrooms again. Later, I learned that we were privileged because we could go to restaurants. And that a true meritocracy didn't yet exist in America. And that others had it way harder than I could ever imagine.

I dedicated my career to trying to level the playing field. I started at the federal level, spent some time in Sacramento, and then made my way home to LA County where our departments are the safety net for Angelenos who need us most. I'm back in the Valley, raising my daughters, and it's definitely better for them, but we still have a long way to go. Just today, on the anniversary of the Atlanta spa killings, NPR reported that 62% of hate crime reports are made by AAPI women. It has got to stop.

In the important county work that you're doing, are there any issues that you could highlight about the county's AAPI community?

I love the diversity of the County workforce. Have you ever been in an elevator at work surrounded by people from all walks of life, with vastly different backgrounds, and thought to yourself, "LA is the best"? The diversity of the AAPI community is so deep and geographically expansive, but being so dispersed can undermine our efforts to have our interested represented by elected officials. I was thrilled to read this publication's article on

(continue to page 11)

Mental Health Matters: Mental Health Awareness Amongst AAPIs

Contributed by Winnie Xiao

Did you know that AAPI Heritage Month and Mental Health Awareness Month both fall in May? In anticipation of this time of celebrating AAPI contributions and recognizing the importance of mental health, LACAAEA is actively working with the LA County Department of Mental Health and other community leaders to provide panels and workshops for the AAPI communities starting in May.

Suicide is the leading cause of death for young Asian Americans from ages 15 to 24.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, suicide is the leading cause of death for young Asian Americans from ages 15 to 24. We are also the least likely of all racial groups in the nation to seek out mental health services due to various cultural factors. Mental illness is viewed as a weakness and as reflecting negatively on the entire household.

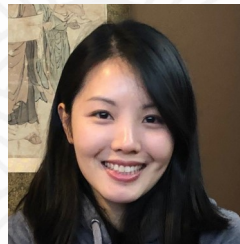
We are also the least likely of all racial groups in the US to seek out mental health services due to various cultural factors.

Many believe that it's due to problematic upbringing, which puts the parents' reputation at stake. The model minority image also adds overwhelming

pressure on many AAPIs as they strive to uphold this image or risk being looked down on. Language is another obstacle to receiving help as 32.6% of AAPIs are not fluent in English. There is a lack of translated material and outreach efforts to spread awareness to AAPIs even though our communities desperately need all the help we can get.

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LACAAEA will be kicking off virtual mental health workshops with a panel of guest speakers in May. Please be on the look out for an email notification from us for a date and time. We welcome you to spread the word to your family and friends and participate in this conversation with us to help improve the lives of our AAPI communities.



Winnie received her bachelor's degree from USC Marshall School of Business. She currently works as an appraiser at the Assessor's Office handling business property valuation. She enjoys working closely with the public and helping people navigate through the complex system of property assessments.

Winnie's favorite pastime is sitting down with a coffee and reading a good book. She also enjoys traveling, drawing, singing, and playing the piano.

Contributions from our Community: Fitting into America

Contributed by Tony Han

On May 2, 1976, my life changed forever. That was the day I came to America. I was petrified. I did not speak one word of English or knew anything of the culture, but I was hooked right away. This was Disneyland every day.



Even though it was not easy by any means to fit in, I made the best of it and started to fit in. I threw out all the "fashionable" clothes I brought from Korea and got "cool" clothes kids my age wore here. I played baseball instead of soccer. I made friends. Except my friends here were of different color and origin and not all the same as they were in Korea.

What a country!!! I discovered America allows self-satisfaction, and individualism whereas in Korea, it's everyone working together and sacrificing for one cause.



Even though I am self-conscious at times around Asians because I've become "Americanized", I know all of them will help me because they want to see Asians succeed and we help each other without

condition. I see the joy when they realize I made our race proud by adapting and making good on my opportunities.

There are times I ask myself exactly where I belong as I've given up my Korean citizenship to be an American citizen, and there are places and times where I get the impression I'm not wanted.



I tell myself it's their problem as I'm not hurting anyone or trying to convince people to accept me. I accept myself for who and what I am, and appearances and skin color are not of any concern to me. I am very thankful to live in a diverse country where everyone has an opportunity to succeed.



Tony has been with Internal Services Dept (ISD) for 21 years and is currently the Building Crafts Superintendent for the Emergency Operations Center where he is the primary contact for the CEO on all craft matters pertaining to the facility, which includes electrical, plumbing, HVAC, generator services, IT, custodial and landscaping. As second in command for Special Services, they support county events by supplying and setting up press conferences, all

board member meetings and events, as well as charitable functions with Supervisor Banners and Seals, lectern, tables and chairs and canopies among other needs. Tony's hobbies include yoga, meditation, golf and weight lifting.

Mapping Our Roots: Little Bronze Tokyo

Contributed by Nyke Parham

LA—the “global metropolis.” Home to people of many different racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, although Calif. had entered the Union (US) as a *free state*, many still attempted to create an “Anglo paradise” due to the Gold Rush, an agricultural boom, and a location close to the sea. Many pushed “efforts to subordinate Mexicans, exclude Chinese, and prohibit blacks,” which resulted in various genocides, uprisings, and policies in SoCal. Despite the segregationist housing, discriminatory job market, and targeted violence, LA still proved itself to be a place filled with the promise of higher wages and homeownership. Many parts of LA had become enclaves and hubs of businesses, landownership, art, and activism.

It was an executive order. The war that the US had once claimed neutrality in had touched the homeland and exacerbated tensions both subtly held and overt. Following the tragedy at Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, which authorized the forced removal of all people deemed a “threat to national security” from the West Coast to internment camps further inland. While the order affected Italian and German Americans as well, the target of such an order was those of Japanese descent—regardless of American citizenship status or years of residence. Japantowns up and down the West Coast became ghost towns. One of these towns was Little Tokyo.

During this war period, many people continued to flock to Los Angeles to fulfill their dreams. The migration patterns brought many ethnic minorities to the city and, due to housing restrictions, lived and worked closely together. After Japanese residents were evicted from their homes by the military, the influx of new residents still had no place to reside

except in places where building owners had many vacant properties to fill. Many African Americans from the Deep South created a home in Little Tokyo and by October 1943 African American businessmen created the Bronzeville Chamber of Commerce. Since housing was still scarce for non-whites who were restricted from the suburbs, Bronzeville, unfortunately, became subject to overcrowding and other slum-like conditions. Even so, Bronzeville and nearby Central Ave became a bustling hub of artistic creations. “Breakfast clubs,” or nightclubs that stayed open until the night turned into breakfast time, were filled with jazz and blues. War workers now had more disposable income and they spent it how they desired.



During the 1945 transition, as Japanese Americans returned to Bronzeville/Little Tokyo, African Americans left the central area due to buy out, leases not renewed, and in some cases, lawsuits. Not all African Americans left the area, and even with some

racial tension, there was much collaboration that had continued throughout the interwar period and beyond. Organizations like the Nisei Progressives helped African Americans find housing and African American attorney and chair of the California Race Relations Commission Hugh MacBeth argued the case of *People vs. Oyama* after being the chief voice exposing the injustice against West Coast Japanese Americans. Although Bronzeville is no longer physically present in Little Tokyo, historian Martha Nakagawa continues to highlight this piece of long-forgotten LA history.



Nyke is a native Angelino TEFL instructor, independent AfroAsian scholar, and student of Korean culture and language. Currently she shares her research on my2baek1.com, educating the masses about Blasian identity, AfroAsian history, solidarity, and culture through pop culture references.

Champion of Change: Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960)



A world-renowned writer and anthropologist, Hurston studied and highlighted black folklore and the arts. Born in Notasulga, Alabama on January 7, 1891 to former slaves, Hurston and her parents soon sought a better life in Eatonville, Florida where they flourished. Her father became one of the town’s first mayors. She attended Morgan College in 1917, where she completed her high school studies; Howard University, where she earned an associates degree, participated in student government and co-founded the school’s newspaper *The Hilltop*; and Barnard College from 1925-1928, where she earned her BA in anthropology. During her time in New York City, she

befriended other writers like Langston Huges and Countee Cullen and became a familiar name during the Harlem Renaissance. She often incorporated her research on black culture from the diaspora in her works, such as *Mules and Men*. Her most popular work, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, broke literary norms by focusing on the experience of a black woman.

As we commemorate the internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans on February 19, 1942, it as Hurston, who found solidarity in their disdain for the US’ “predatory wanderlus directed against people of color at home and around the world.” In 1946, Hurston wrote a letter to her friend Claude Barnett, the president of the Associated Negro Press and the country’s first Black news service, venting her anger at President Harry Truman, whom she described as the “butcher of Asia.” Throughout her letter, it was clear that she felt, and wanted others to know, that US foreign policy in Asia is genocidal and racist and implicitly an attack on Black Americans. She wanted to wake everyone up to what she felt was the reality. Although her writing and advocacy did not become known until after her death, she continues to inspire and influence writers and advocates around the world.

LA County Arts and Creative Recovery & Support

Contributed by Winnie Xiao

In 2021, the Board of Supervisors announced a plan of allocating 22 million dollars from the federal American Rescue Act to serving the arts and cultural programs throughout LA County. Much of the funding will focus on areas impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic bringing recovery and revival to hard-hit sectors. This is especially important for minority groups and underserved residents not only because they were the ones most affected by the pandemic, but because the diverse cultures that make up LA County's population is often preserved through artistic expressions. Below is a list of the programs that are receiving funding:

- Arts Relief and Recovery Grants to Nonprofits and Individuals
- Jobs for Artists and Creative Workers
- Reopening Culture, Tourism, and Marketing Initiative
- Creative Career Pathways for Youth
- Arts Education Program for Vulnerable LA County Schools

As AAPI communities are finding their voices and becoming stronger through the pandemic, it is vital that we continue to learn and share our cultural heritage so that we can promote equity and diversity. AAPI receive less representation in the media and our contributions to society receive less recognition. We need to support our own arts and cultures so that our artists have the resources to thrive. Here are some upcoming programs and activities that can be both fun and educational:

April 23 & 24

Bollywood Glam: Spring Fashion Night

<https://www.eventbrite.com/o/bollywood-dreams-entertainment-1125166415>

June 2

Interstate: A New Musical

East West Players: <https://eastwestplayers.org/>

June 11

Ronin Expo

Japanese American Cultural and Community Center

<https://www.ronin-expo.org/>

June 17 & 18

Ktown Night Market

<https://www.ktownnightmarket.com/>

Meet a County Leader: Genie Chough (cont.)

(continue from page 7)

redistricting and how that impacts our community. We need to be more visible and heard.

In light of the rise in AAPI hate crimes that are occurring in our community, what are some (or one thing) our community can do as a response?

I'm really optimistic about the impact that the County's Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) initiative can have. We are fortunate to have a Board that prioritizes racial equity and brought on D'Artagnan Scorza as Executive Director. He and his ARDI team are leading us to focus on improving life-course outcomes for our residents—outcomes like decreasing infant mortality, reducing poverty, and improving educational attainment.

To get there, we all need to start with the same facts, whether historical facts that were omitted from our classrooms or data about systemic racism. I hope we can also get to a place where we can feel free to have courageous conversations about race. After decades of striving to be "color-

blind" or live in a "melting pot," I think our County community is ready to engage in meaningful debate and discussion, ask hard questions, and show grace when answering.

As Chief Deputy Director for the Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department (CSSD), Genie supports the Director in planning, evaluating and directing all day-to-day operations of the Department. Previously, she served as Administrative Deputy overseeing budget and finance, human resources, contracts/procurement, equity initiatives, emergency management, and facilities.

Genie joins CSSD with over 25 years' experience at the local, State and federal levels of government on budget and policy issues affecting children and families. Prior to CSSD, Genie served as an advisor to elected officials and policymakers, including Supervisors Sheila Kuehl and Zev Yaroslavsky, First 5 LA, and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

In 2001, she was appointed by the Governor to serve as Assistant Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency and Ex Officio member of the First 5 California Commission. Genie previously worked in the White House as Assistant Director of the Domestic Policy Council, as well as for the Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget of the US Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, DC.

Genie is a native of Los Angeles, and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Vassar College and a Masters in Public Policy from the University of California, Berkeley, Goldman School of Public Policy. She lives in Sherman Oaks with her spouse and two teenage daughters.

Supporting Local AAPI Businesses Doing Some Good!

Contributed by Chris Ventura of Rosemead Chamber of Commerce



**3588 Rosemead Blvd., Rosemead
(626) 280-8885
www.rosecitypizza.com**

Rose City Pizza offers a unique experience for pizza lovers with a variety of signature culinary creations.

Since it opened its doors in 2009, Brian Nittayo owns and operates Rose City Pizza in Rosemead as well as its second location Pizza which opened in September 2021 in the city of Covina.

Nittayo graduated from Cal Poly Pomona's Collins College of Hospitality Mgmt—earning his degree in Hotel & Restaurant Mgmt. Outside of his studies, he gained experience working at several restaurants and hotels, and received professional training. He has also trained under 13-time World Pizza Champion Tony Gemignani.

He spent time working in New York and fell in love with authentic New York style pizza—a style and recipe that he adamantly recreates in his restaurant kitchens today.

He began his trek into business ownership when his family opened a franchise of Cold Stone Creamery in San Dimas. Eventually, his family would open a second Cold Stone location in Rosemead. His sister Catherine still owns and operates the Cold Stone Creamery in Rosemead.

In 2009, Brian, with the help of his sister Catherine, opened Rose City Pizza. Several years following the opening, Nittayo explained that his sister had

stepped back from the pizza business and turned her full attention back to her Cold Stone Creamery in Rosemead as well as spending time raising a family of her own.

A combination of streamlined techniques, innovations, and unique recipes has made Rose City Pizza a continued long-term success and makes it a choice destination amongst many of its local competitors.



One of the turning points for Rose City Pizza was its ability to adapt its business during COVID, which led to an increase in efficiency. As Brian explained, pizza is a key take-out option for many, and during the pandemic, many locals turned to Rose City Pizza as a prime choice and consistent take-out option. Rose City Pizza was able to adapt its business practices to meet the demand.

(continue on page 12)

Rose City Pizza (cont.)

(continue from page 11)

As Brian explained, originally they relied solely on old-school brick ovens which weren't the fastest at cooking pizzas. As demand increased, they adapted their preparation and recipes to be able to use pizza presses and conveyor ovens to speed up prep-time and cook-time.

Technology also played a role in his business improvements.

"We instituted a POS system," Brian said. "Before that we were writing tickets down. The POS system would also send a text message to the customer when it was ready. So that was helpful, because we couldn't have too many people waiting inside so they could just wait in their cars or go shopping and come back."

Since business operations became more streamlined and the new kitchen equipment was easier to use, this aided in his ability to meet demand and grow, eventually growing into a second location. He explained that these changes helped him to more easily hire new employees during a time when businesses were suffering from staffing shortages. With these changes, it was easier to train new employees using simpler preparation and cooking methods and providing employees with tools to take orders quickly, accurately, and to serve customers better.



"I hired anybody who was willing to put in hard work and [was] passionate about pizza and passionate about us," Brian said. "With these new conveyor ovens and the pizza presses, I was able to still maintain our consistency and increase efficiency."

Brian believes in giving a chance to anyone who has a passion for the business of making quality food and delivering great customer service. 80% of his staff is college students who may have never worked in a restaurant before. For some, this may even be their first job.

On the potential for further growth, Brian said that while he is proud of his ability to streamline and expand, he feels that he'll stick to the two locations for now.

"I'm trying to get my processes down where, you know, anybody can come in and work and know what to do," Brian said. "That's what I'm thriving for. I'm just trying to find better practices. If you're old enough to work and you show me that you're passionate about putting in good work, then my job is to provide you with the skills and the tools to do well at your job."

Brian initially faced some challenges when he first opened in 2009—during an economic recession. He said that he once received some sound advice from a customer which provided hope during the economic downturn.

The message from that customer has stuck with him. 'The more people you talk to, the more people you get on your side, the more people you establish friendships with...they'll never let you sink.' Brian has taken that attitude to social media, interacting and reaching out to customers. He also makes it a point to always check on customers and converse with those who visit his restaurants. Communication and social connections are keys to success.



"With all those supporters, no matter how bad it gets, I feel like as long as we treat them right and do the best we can, they won't let us sink," Brian said.

Rose City Pizza is not just your average pizza place. "You're going to try things you never tried before and you're going to be mind-blown at how good it tastes," Brian said.

Brian said that a number of their unique pizza recipes have been inspired by his own experiences in cultural dining and culinary cooking. They have also been inspired by (and guided by) his employees' suggestions, their different nutritional requirements, and their multicultural backgrounds.

In addition to the traditional offerings of a pizzeria, some of Rose City Pizza's unique signature recipe pizzas include: Elote, The Flamin' Hot Elote, Birria, Al Pastor, Char Siu, Manila Sunrise (a Filipino-inspired breakfast pizza), Taiwanese Popcorn Chicken, Queso Fundido, Space Cowboy, and Jalapeno Popper. Plus, they also offer vegan friendly options and a Dog-friendly pizza.

Prior to having children of his own, Brian and his wife used to rescue pit bulls. His life-long love for dogs has carried over into the kitchen.

"We have an outdoor seating area and I noticed the dog would just be sitting at the table with a look of yearning for their food," Brian said. "I think it'd be really cool if we gave something to them, too. We've always had a love for dogs. we treat our dogs like, kids. So you have got to get something for the kids... your fur-babies!"

Having overcome the challenges of a recession and a pandemic, Rose City Pizza is poised for continued success at not just one, but two locations—creating a unique dining experience for customers, a satisfying workplace for its employees, and a strong and joyful connection with the communities they serve.