



# Federal Asian Pacific American Council

# FAPAC

Promoting Equal Opportunity and Cultural Diversity of Asian American Pacific Islanders in Government

## President's Message

### Upcoming Events:

- July 8 — OPM Navigating USAJOBS
- July 10 — 1st Friday Webinar, Surviving Market Swings
- July 20 — Federally Employed Women Virtual Leadership Summit
- July 27 — OPM Interviewing Techniques
- Aug 5 — OPM Navigating USAJOBS
- Aug 6 — OPM Interviewing Techniques
- Aug 10 — OPM Federal Resume Writing
- Aug 19 — Virtual NextGen Govt Training Summit

Find event details on our website: [www.fapac.org](http://www.fapac.org)

Since 1978, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month is observed annually during the month of May to celebrate generations of AAPI's and their contributions in American history, society, and culture.

This is an exciting time for FAPAC and we are proud to select a theme in observance of 2020's AAPI Heritage Month — **Unite Our Nation by Empowering Equality**. This year's theme is a continuation of our "Unite" series and focuses on leadership, diversity, and inclusion.

Unfortunately, this is also a difficult and heartbreaking time and the words I cannot mention unity without mentioning the name of George Floyd. As an organization that promotes diversity and inclusion, we cannot ignore his death and those before him to the hands of injustice. FAPAC recognizes the pain and suffering caused by racism, bigotry,

and violence that affect minorities and their respective communities of color in this country. FAPAC stands for equality and equality for *all*.



The nation is rightly sickened by the wronged death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN where he was brutally restrained by a Minneapolis Police Officer, and as a result, passed away. FAPAC is committed to being a part of the solution in partnership with organizations, businesses, and community leaders, who stand for equal opportunity in this country.

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Pictured above: The location of George Floyd's death in Minneapolis, MN, which has been memorialized by the community through bouquets, signs, and art.



## 2020 FAPAC Award Winners

The Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2020 FAPAC Awards. These awards recognize civilians and military servicemembers who have made significant contributions to the advancement and promotion of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs). The FAPAC Awards include the Uniformed Services, Civilian, and Distinguished Public Service Scholarship Awards.

### UNIFORMED SERVICES AWARDS

- LT Lu Wang, U.S. Navy
- MSgt Travis W. Bulay, U.S. Air Force
- MSgt Timothy Asa C. Tanbonliong, U.S. Air Force
- TSgt Sarahlizamarie D. Pante-Berrios, U.S. Air Force
- SSgt Michael E. Jolls, U.S. Air Force
- LCDR Rhianna Macon, U.S. Coast Guard
- LT John R. Santorum, U.S. Coast Guard
- CPO Jacinto A. Sabangan, U.S. Coast Guard
- CAPT Sally Hu, U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps

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Learn more at [www.fapac.org/membership](http://www.fapac.org/membership).

Contact Membership Chair at [membership@fapac.org](mailto:membership@fapac.org).



### CIVILIAN AWARDS

#### Outstanding Individual Leadership

- Katherine Toth, Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency
- Cindy N. Tran, Defense Contract Management Agency
- Dr. Zina B. Sutch, Office of Personnel Management

#### Excellence in Individual Achievement

- John Wilson Howerton, U.S. Army
- Doris S. Tung, U.S. Navy
- Jeffrey Clark Flora, Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency

#### Diversity Excellence

- Van R. Nguyen, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Loucious Hires, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- Courtney L. Wilkerson, Federal Aviation Administration

### DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

- Alex T. Pham, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

#### Find your FAPAC Chapter!

Connect with fellow FAPAC Members through a Chapter near you. View all active chapters at [www.fapac.org/chapter](http://www.fapac.org/chapter)





# May AAPI Heritage Month Celebrations

During the month of May, multiple FAPAC chapters across the nation engaged virtually in celebration of Asian American & Pacific Heritage Month. From webinars to Zoom chats, AAPIs, family, and friends tuned in to connect despite nationwide social distancing practices amid the coronavirus pandemic. Below is a compilation of various events flyers and a summary highlights.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, FAPAC DOT Chapter hosted a successful AAPI Month observation in collaboration with the DOT Asian Pacific American Employee Council (APAEC) and the FAA National Asian and Pacific American Association (NAPA). Over 200 registrants participated in this event themed “Unite Our Nation by Empowering Equality.”

Welcome remarks were delivered by Honorable U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Elaine L. Chao and series of guest speakers. Topics ranged from

Railroad. Originally known as the “Pacific Railroad,” it was constructed between 1863 and 1869, spanning over 1900 miles from the Pacific coast—the Oakland Long Wharf in San Francisco—to an existing network of eastern railways starting in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The Central Pacific Railroad company of California completed a near 700-mile stretch of the railroad, from Sacramento to Utah through the mountainous pass of the Sierra Nevada’s. It was immensely difficult work, to drill through layers of dense rock, but the high mountain range’s severe weather conditions of snow and ice were unforgiving. In 1864, Central Pacific began to hire Chinese immigrant workers to accomplish this task and by the time the railway was completed, Chinese laborers accounted for over 90 percent of Central Pacific’s workforce.

U.S. Department of Transportation  
2020 Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

virtual event

**Unite Our Nation by Empowering Equality**

With remarks from

**Ray Tellis**  
Federal Transit Administration

**Dr. Ravi Chaudhary**  
Federal Aviation Administration

**Ted Gong**  
1882 Foundation

**David Uy**  
Chinese American Museum

Friday, May 22 | Noon ET  
Register: <https://tinyurl.com/926z9wem>

jointly presented by

Asian Pacific American Employee Council



Image of the “Summit Tunnel”, part of the Transcontinental Railway and one of seven sites that traverses Auburn, CA to Donner Pass.



The Exterior of the Summit Tunnel. Without any federal, state, city or county markings to denote and protect its historic significance, the site has been vandalized with graffiti. Forgotten are the 20,000 Chinese immigrant workers who sacrificed for this infrastructure, linking the United States from east to west coast.

## AAPI HERITAGE MONTH

THE OFFICIAL ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH ORIGINATED IN 1977 WHEN THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DESIGNATED THE MONTH OF MAY TO RECOGNIZE THE HARDSHIP FACE BY EARLY ASIAN IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES AND THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMERICA’S HISTORY AND SOCIETY.

leadership in our current COVID-19 working environment to historical AAPI contributions in the development of this country. Specifically, Ted Gong, Director of the 1882 Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to broadening public awareness of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, presented on Chinese contributions, vital to the construction of the Transcontinental



## May AAPI Heritage Month Celebrations

On May 20th, FAPAC DOI celebrated AAPI Heritage month via webinar with special guest speaker, Dr. Russell M. Jeung, Chair and Professor



of Asian American Studies Department at San Francisco State University. Over 600 registrants tuned into this virtual event, which was kicked-off by President Olivia Adrian. In her welcoming remarks, she commented on the contributions of over 20 million AAPI's who have been fundamental to the development of this nation's economy, security, and culture. Recognized were those who have served and are currently serving in the armed forces and community first responders. President Adrian closed the words, "Together, we will continue to live out the promise of our founding and build a better future for all Americans."

### FAPAC NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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While adhering to social distancing, FAPAC US Coast Guard Chapter celebrated AAPI Heritage month via virtual forum and discussion on May 29th. In keeping with the theme "Unite Our Nation by Empowering Equality" and commemorating the "45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Fall of Saigon," FAPAC-USCG hosted keynote

speaker Ms. Lauren Vuong, a Vietnamese American Refugee, lawyer and film producer of the documentary *Finding the Virgo*. Additionally, there were special guests that included FAPAC-USCG Executive Champion RDML Andrew Sugimoto, Diversity & Inclusion Office Chief Mr. Miguel Aviles-Perez, and FAPAC President Olivia Adrian. FAPAC Uniformed Service Award winners were acknowledged during the event: LCDR Rhianna Macon; LT John R. Santorum; and CPO Jacinto A. Sabangan.

FAPAC-USCG

PRESENTS:

## 2020 MAY AAPI HERITAGE CELEBRATION

FRIDAY MAY 29, 2020

1200-1300 (EST)/ 0900-1000 (PST)

Call in or connect virtually with the info below:



Producer Lauren Vuong is a Vietnamese American refugee and naturalized U.S. citizen. She attended UC Berkeley where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in English Literature. Lauren earned her Juris Doctorate from the University of San Francisco School of Law and practices in San Francisco, CA. She is a mother of two and a dedicated advocate for the preservation of Vietnamese American history through the arts and literature. *Finding the Virgo* is Lauren's first documentary.





## May AAPI Heritage Month Celebrations

### Facing the Pandemic as an AAPI Community

On May 28th, FAPAC NIH Chapter celebrated AAPI Heritage via virtual forum to discuss the coronavirus pandemic and current issues that face the AAPI community. Specifically, impacts felt by the AAPI community during the pandemic and navigating paths to remain strong while continuing to serve. FAPAC NIH welcomed guest speakers Rita Pin Ahrens, Executive Director of OCA — Asian Pacific American Advocates; Maryland Pao, MD., and Clinical



Director at NIH; Clarence K. Lam, MD, MPH, Maryland State Senator. Topics and discussions ranged from building resiliency to serving the community. Closing remarks were provided by President Adrian, who concluded with historical contributions AAPIs have made to our society including businesses, politics, art, and literature. President Adrian also acknowledged and this year's Uniformed Services Award Winner, CAPT Sally Hu, U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps.

*"Our accomplishments have enriched this nation and stand as a testament to the power of the American Dream."*

—President Olivia Adrian

**ASIAN  
AMERICAN &  
PACIFIC  
ISLANDER  
HERITAGE MONTH**  
UNITE OUR NATION BY  
EMPOWERING EQUALITY  
Guest Speaker:  
**Phil Tajitsu Nash**  
Thursday, May 14th, 2020  
11:00AM - 12:00PM EST  
Virtual (Webinar)

**Unite the Mission, Be the Change: Honoring the Past, Securing the Future**  
Join us in celebration of Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month  
May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020, 1:00 PM CST  
<https://www.nasa.gov/asia-heritage-month/>  
Featuring:  
**Dr. Mat Park** with  
*"The Strength of Being You"*  
Please contact Brenda Mack for reasonable accommodations at [brenda.j.mack@nasa.gov](mailto:brenda.j.mack@nasa.gov)  
NASA Unity. Transcend. Connect.

### "Born in Asia" Story Submission & Contest

Global Dragon TV is seeking our stories!

Stories of Asian American immigrants will be collected into a book called "Born in Asia — Stories of Celebrated Asian Americans," and selected stories will be featured in a television documentary. The book will be donated to the Library of Congress, Smithsonian Museums, and Asian museums around the country.

Their mission is to collect and publish the largest Asian American stories to record our sacrifices, triumphs and contributions to this great nation, America.

According to their website, Asian Americans are the fastest-growing major ethnic group in the United States and more than 20 million Asians live in America. Asian Americans contribute in every sector our society and trace their roots to more than 20 countries in East and Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent, each with unique histories, cultures, languages, and other characteristics.

**Contest deadline is August 31, 2020.** Additional details can be found on their website at [www.borninainasa.com](http://www.borninainasa.com)

12801 Fair Lakes Pkwy | Fairfax, VA 22033 | [www.fapac.org](http://www.fapac.org)





## FAPAC Charters DOT Chapter in Virtual Ceremony

On April 20<sup>th</sup>, FAPAC conducted a virtual installation of officers from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) via Zoom. This was the first virtual charting in FAPAC history as over 25 employees gathered online to participate and witness the event. President Oliva Adrian proceeded with the ceremony, swearing in the newly appointed officers (pictured right). Special guests included Yolanda Hilliard, DOT's Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator, Dr. Ravi Chaudhary, Office of Next Generation Air Transportation at the Federal Aviation Administration, and FAPAC National Board of Directors. DOT Chapter Offices are as follows:



- President – Thanh Trang;
- Vice President (Primary) – Bingxin Yn
- Vice President (Secondary) – Alok Jain
- Secretary – Ranmali Fonseka
- Treasurer – Annabelle Flores
- Auditor – Hua “Bill” He
- Membership Chair – Julie Chang

In his acceptance speech, President Trang highlighted both short-term and long-term

goals, and emphasized two major cornerstones for the chapter:

1. To serve as a professional resource for the recruitment, retention, and promotion of AAPI employees serving across the country within the DOT; and
2. To partner with DOT organizations across the nation to promote a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive environment conducive to the professional development and growth for employees of all backgrounds

Congratulations and welcome DOT Chapter!

*“The people who were sworn in today have worked tirelessly to get this chapter off the ground... I would like to applaud everyone involved who have helped get us to this day in chartering FAPAC’s 18<sup>th</sup> chapter.”*

— Katherine Toth, FAPAC National Chapter Chair

## Career Development Mentoring Program

The Career Development Program (CDP) Committee fully utilized self-paced and virtual interactive workshops in the COVID-19 environment, creating a library of free courses and seminars, to help 2020 mentees complete CDP training workshop requirements. Additionally, CDP Committee Chair, Dr. Phuong Le Callaway, in partnership with Mr. Guno Ritfeld, President of Alternative Dispute Resolution Academy, and Mrs. Linda M. Farley, consultant and facilitator of LMFarley.com, secured 14 workshop courses, free of charge to mentees to take

place between April and August 2020. Course topics range from team building and leadership motivation to workplace conflict resolution and building self-confidence, which will be surveyed at the end of the period to tailor future training needs.

The CDP is scheduled to conclude at the end of September, and graduation ceremony to be held November 2020, in Washington

D.C. We look forward to our future graduates navigating this virtual platform, who will forever set the precedence for future classes.

FAPAC is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan, nonprofit organization representing the civilian and military Asian Americans and Pacific Islander (AAPI) employees in the Federal and District of Columbia governments.



Guno Ritfeld, J.D.  
President, Alternative Dispute Resolution Academy



Linda M. Farley  
Training Consultant, Speaker, Trainer and Facilitator, LMFarley.com





## Our Stories— Thong Vu on Achieving His Dream

Imagine you're 21 years old and dropped into the middle of a culture you know nothing about, hearing a language you don't speak. For AFN's Thong Vu, this was his reality coming to the United States in 1993 from his home in Vietnam. "My father fought alongside the American military as a member of the South Vietnamese Army during the war. After the United States pulled out of the country, he was imprisoned for almost 10 years for fighting for the South in what was called a 're-education camp' by the Vietnamese government," said Vu.

The U.S. government considered re-education camp inmates to be political prisoners. In 1989, the Reagan administration entered into an agreement with the Vietnamese government to which Vietnam would free all former soldiers and officials held in those camps and allow them to immigrate to the United States.



Pictured left to right, Thong Vu's sisters Huyen-Trang, Uyen Trang, his mother, father, and Thong Vu himself.

*"We had no relatives, we didn't speak the language, and everything about America was unfamiliar to us."*

— Thong Vu



(L-R) Thong Vu, Uyen-Trang Vu, father, mother, Huyen-Trang Vu, and Thong's grandmother affront.

While they were waiting for the U.S. government to accept their asylum, Thong's father usually visited his friend living in another district to talk about which state he should be settled in, as he had no reference. During those visits, his dad's friend introduced him to another friend who came back to visit Vietnam from Albuquerque, New Mexico. Later, they became friends and Thong's dad asked him to be their sponsor after they were granted asylum.

After his friend became their sponsor in the U.S., he found them an apartment, and helped the Vu family settle into American life. The adjustment from Saigon to Albuquerque, however, was not easy.

In an effort to better adjust to their new home, the family – mom, dad, Thong and his two sisters – enrolled in English as a Second Language classes at the local community college. Thong eventually got a part-time job at McDonald's in front of the University of New Mexico's main campus. Thong dreamed of attending this university and wanted to take advantage of more of the opportunities available in his new land.

During his first two years, Thong had some hands-on lab experience with electrical wires, boards, digital signals and controls. It piqued his interest in the Electrical Engineering program.

"I decided to enroll in the University of New Mexico's Electrical Engineering program. I saw college as a way to take advantage of what my new country had to offer," Vu said. While at UNM, Vu interned with the U.S. Department of Energy in Amarillo, Texas. This is where the public service bug bit him. After graduating in 2001, Vu accepted a temporary job with the U.S. Patent and Trade Office in Crystal City, VA, which brought him to the Washington, D.C. area.

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## Our Stories Continued

He didn't stay in his first job long, moving on to a contract position with the FAA for five years. When it looked like the contract might not be renewed, his FAA task order manager encouraged him to apply for a federal position with the agency. Vu came on board in 2008 as a general engineer in ACQ's Investment Process Management (IPM) Division. He served as a Post-Implementation Review team lead that assessed actual investment costs, schedules, benefits, performance, and mission outcomes of various programs against appropriate measures of effectiveness.

Since that first position, Vu has moved on and up at the FAA. He took a job with ACQ's Integrated Services Branch, which is now the Joint Resources Council (JRC) Branch. This group is responsible for providing information technology, website support and guidance, and for managing the Investment Process Management (IPM) support services contracts. Vu now leads a team that manages, designs, and enhances the JRC Members and Operations Governance Board (OGB) Members SharePoint sites. These sites allow members to prepare for and to attend the FAA's corporate-level investment decision meetings. Also, Vu and his team design and oversee the JRC Readiness Systems, which provides the status of each checklist item for all proposed investments/programs currently seeking investment decisions.



(L-R) Holly Ham, Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; Thong Vu; Olivia Adrian, FAPAC President

*"I am so proud to work for the FAA and have the chance to support my country's aviation system. But my dreams aren't done. There's so much more for me to do, and I never would have had the chance to do any of this if my family hadn't take a chance on America."*

— Thong Vu

Vu's public service doesn't end there, however. He joined the FAA's National Asian & Pacific American Association (NAPA), one of eight recognized employee associations at the agency.



(L-R) Kevin Le, former NAPA president, Thong Vu, Michele Merkle, Director of ATO Operational Planning and Integration.

"I've served as NAPA's treasurer for a few terms as well as their webmaster. I'm also the webmaster and photographer for the Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC). They are a nonpartisan organization representing civilian and military Asian Pacific American employees in the federal and District of Columbia governments. These opportunities are so important to me, as a way of giving back and supporting people with similar cultural backgrounds," said Vu.

His siblings have also forged their own paths in their pursuit of the American Dream. Vu's older sister is a physician in New Mexico, and his younger sister is a fashion designer in Long Beach, California. For Vu, growing his career in public service at the FAA is part of his dream.

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