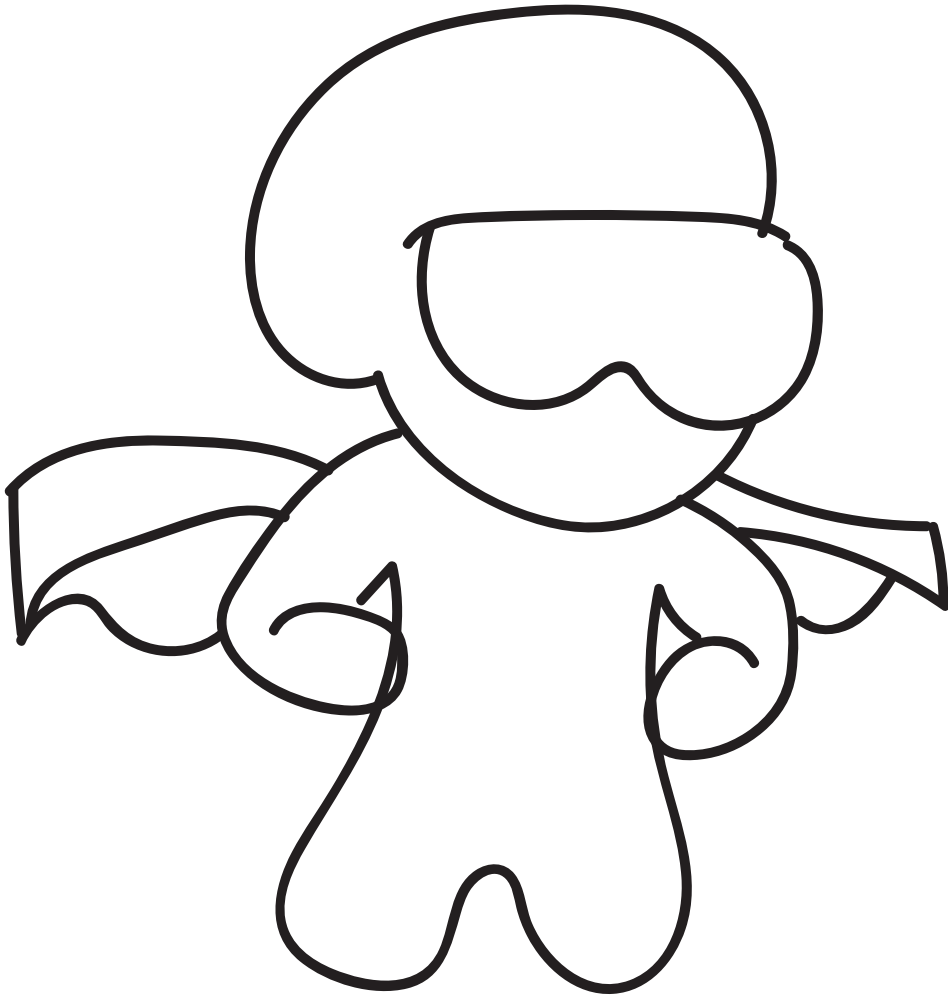
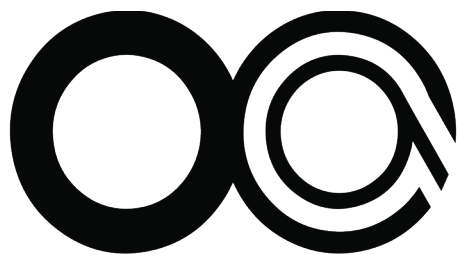


HEROES



IMAGEO 
Fall/Winter 2018 **ADVOCATE**



ADVOCATE

About OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates

OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates is a national membership-driven organization of community advocates dedicated to advancing the social, political, and economic well-being of Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) in the United States.

To fulfill its mission, OCA has adapted the following goals to:

- Advocate for social justice, equal opportunity and fair treatment;
- Promote civic participation, education, and leadership;
- Advance coalitions and community building; and
- Foster cultural heritage

Founded as Organization of Chinese Americans in 1973, OCA has since grown to a robust national advocacy organization to advance the civil rights of Asian Pacific Americans and aspiring Americans. The organization presently has over 100 chapters, affiliates, and partners, impacting more than 35,000 individuals all across the country through local and national programming. While the organization's headquarters remain in Washington, DC, allowing OCA to directly engage in critical public policy issues on a macro level, it continues to largely remain as a grassroots constituency of lay advocates from all walks of life and diverse ethnic identities addressing uniquely local level issues impacting over 19 million Asian Pacific Americans across the country.

OCA takes no collective position on the politics of any foreign country, but instead focuses on the welfare and civil rights of Asian Pacific Americans.

IMAGE

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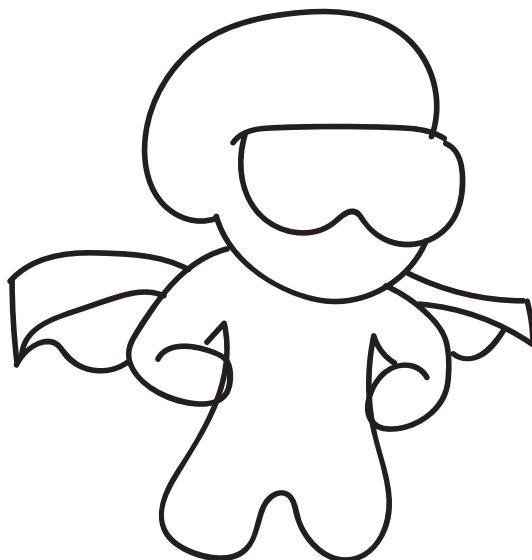
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BUT NOT ALL HEROS WEAR CAPES



Dear AdvOCAtes,

The end of the year brings winter holidays as well as reflections. Whether that be lessons learned, new year's resolutions, or people who have made an impression on us, we look back in order to plan how we will move forward in 2019.

With another historic number of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) who ran for office during the midterm elections, and will be part of the next Congress, it is clear that we need to push harder than ever to develop, uplift, and support AAPIs in order to have more seats at the table. In 2019, we also must shift our focus to Getting Out the Count (GOTC) for the 2020 Census. The results of the Census will impact redistricting, allocation of public funds for education and other areas that have a direct result on our community, access to services, and much more.

OCA continues to stay on the forefront of these issues, both as a national partner with the Census Bureau, and a leading organization in the AAPI community. Our work in policy and advocacy, professional and student development programs, and support and empowerment of our interns and local chapters will be essential to GOTC work.

We need you to join us, whether as an OCA member, and/or in donating time and resources to help us continue the work that we do. We can only accomplish our mission with your help.

I look forward to our continued collaboration to ensure the voices of our community are heard, our concerns are acted upon, our contributions are acknowledged, and we maximize the full potential of the API community!

In solidarity,

Sharon M. Wong
OCA National President



Dear Friends,

Happy holidays! As with every year, this season brings us, at the very least, two things: the reflections, and the spirit of giving.

There are many ways to reflect, and in this season's issue of IMAGE we reflect upon the people in our lives who have made a positive impact on us and the community in many different ways. We introduce to you the Unsung Heroes who were honored at our OCA National Convention – chapter members who have become role models for the OCA family, as well as some of our other family, friends, acquaintances, or seemingly-far reaching stars who deserve a shout out. This issue's title, Heroes, doesn't refer to Marvel characters and doesn't require life-saving capabilities. Instead, it refers to the everyday people who champion our civil rights, who serve us coffee at 7AM without fail every morning, or remind us of our worth over a bowl of soup at home.

At OCA, we understand that big change begins with the nurture and development of our young people. Those that become our movers and shakers. Our internship and civil rights fellowship programs are structured around both personal and professional development. In this way, they are exposed to both big heroes in Congress but also our grassroots movements heroes, and everyone else in between. They are themselves also heroes as role models for their peers and maturing champions of the issues they each care about.

Thank you to all you heroes who make our movement possible.

Kendall T. Kosai
Deputy Director

UNSUNG HEROES

The OCA Unsung Hero Award is granted to five individuals whose time and effort towards advancing equity and equality for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are not often publicly recognized. Each Unsung Hero is recognized during the OCA Gala Awards held at the OCA National Convention in Washington, DC.

TINA CHOI was born in the Philippines to the Chinese parents. She grew up in Hong Kong and immigrated to the United States in 1990s. Tina graduated from University of Denver and is a certified public accountant. Tina Choi has her own accounting firm in Denver specializing in tax preparation, planning, bookkeeping, and further accounting needs.

Tina has been an OCA member for decades and has been a member of Board of Director and Treasurer for over a decade. With her busy schedule, especially during the tax season, Tina has selflessly dedicated her time and energy in coordinating and implementing all the programs and activities sponsored by OCA Colorado.



In the past one year, OCA Colorado had sponsored numerous programs including Lunch and Learn, OCA senior care programs, Summer Community picnic and Wellness Fair, OCA Dragon Boat Race Team, Mid-Autumn Festival Banquet and Cultural Village, OCA X'mas Care Baskets for Senior, and Chinese New Year Banquet and Cultural Fairground and Silent Auction. Tina tirelessly helped coordinate all these events which at times could be very challenging and frustrating. We had about 500 people attending the banquets and the tickets were all sold out. Tina has to deal with the members who could not get the tickets in time. On the day of event, Tina would help out with setup and close up. She did not mind moving heavy items like boxes of water, tables and chairs, etc. She even helped set up the tent and paddled in the dragon boat race. When the emcees are not available for our program, Tina would also fill in and emcee for us. There is no question that Tina is so devoted to OCA that she is willing to do whatever within her power to make all our events successful.

There was a time when OCA Colorado chapter was about to dissolve and thanks to Tina, she was able to save OCA by drumming up the support from the community. She has sacrificed a lot for OCA Colorado and she never complains.

I mentioned that she donated her time to OCA during the busy tax season, the only reason she could do that is because she stayed up real late to work in her office and she also had to work in the weekends.

I honestly believe that Tina deserves to be the Unsung Hero of the year.

Written by OCA - Colorado Chapter leadership and president, Margaret S. Choi.

UNSUNG HEROES

The following was published in *Diversity in Action, Fall Special 2017*. Written by Adina Solomon. Submitted by OCA - Chicago Chapter leadership.



It was advice from his mentors to give back to the community that led **ERWIN CRUZ** to stand in the White House, a high-point in a long career spanning multiple disciplines.

After serving in the U.S. Marine Corps, Cruz joined W.W. Grainger, a Fortune 500 industrial supply company in 1989. He has worked for Grainger in Chicago ever since. Cruz serves as director of intellectual property strategy and management at the intersection of technology, business, and law. He also leads and intellectual property holding company that is a Grainger subsidiary. In order to help him in his role, Cruz earned his law degree from Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law in 2017.

“What I admired most about the legal education was the opportunity to develop my legal acumen and to gain the ability to think with a legal mindset,” he says. He also has master’s degrees in business administration and information systems.

Cruz, who immigrated with his family at the age of 2 to Chicago from the Philippines, always strives to find ways to give back to the community. He joined OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates. Cruz credits his own mentors with inspiring him to give back throughout his career. “They always reminded me to keep the promise to pay it forward,” he says, “so essentially, as my career developed and as I began to move into leadership roles, I had to promise as they were doing for me to be able to guide and mentor others as well.”

Cruz’s work with OCA led to an invitation to be part of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, which works to improve the quality of life for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders through increased access to and participation in federal programs. He was an industry advisor in the initiative from 2014 to 2016, visiting Washington, DC annually to meet with people of different industries and ages and brainstorm recommendations on federal programs. In 2016, Cruz and more than 30 other business and government leaders met at the White House to talk about topics including mentorship, the role of the arts and leadership development. “It was a phenomenal opportunity to see things from my local level, Chicago, and understanding that in many regions throughout the United States, when it comes to inclusion and diversity, [there are] overall very similar challenges.”

While working on the White House Initiative, Cruz enjoyed having a national platform. “Here’s an opportunity to take the passion that I’ve developed on why it’s critical to make people feel included and why diversity is a key aspect to anything that we do in this world and bring that journey that I myself experienced to many regions throughout the United States,” he says.

At Grainger, Cruz is a leader in the Asian and Pacific Islander Business Resource Group, which promotes cultural awareness. The group began a dragon boating team where paddlers sit besides others who have a different function at Grainger. Cruz and the team competed in the 2017 Chicago Dragon Boat Race for Literacy.

While not at work, Cruz spends time with his four children, ranging in age from 12 to 22, and runs regularly. He aims to run two marathons a year and has raced in the Chicago Marathon since 2008.

Cruz never seems to keep still. He plans to pursue a Ph.D. to research the integration of emerging technologies, business and the legal system. Ultimately, one of his career goals is to become a university professor.

Meanwhile, he takes every opportunity to learn from people of different cultures. “In order for you to understand a global world, you have to ensure that those that you interact with and engage with, you make them feel included so that you can learn from their background and experiences,” he says. “You have to open up yourself to change and learning new things.”

UNSUNG HEROES

OUBONVANH LEE DOUANGKEOMANY is currently the VP of Membership for OCA St. Louis. In 2017, she put forth unselfish efforts to make important and significant contributions to our chapter. When she was on the communications committee, she coordinated with board members to collect information about past events for a newsletter to engage members and non-members. She not only shared many fresh ideas to promote membership, but also took the initiative to implement her ideas. Her passion and energy are infectious! With her long work hours on her regular job, she also somehow managed to always find free time to help the chapter and focused her efforts according to our chapter priority. This profoundly helped the chapter to achieve its goals within timelines.



Her volunteer efforts were not limited to the OCA community; she is a leader in the broader community. This year, she competed in the Ag Innovation Showcase as 1 of 3 teams chosen to present on plant science to a crowd of 400 including former U.S. Senator William Danforth. Her passion for science motivated her to found Biotech Navigators, a volunteer group to promote biotechnology in the St. Louis Community Colleges. Lee is also an active mentor in various STEM programs such as Technovation Challenge, Lego Robotics, and CoroWIL-STEM (Women In Leadership). Lee and her family also founded 1 of the 2 Thai Buddhist temples, and regularly helps us set up very successful voter registration drives there.

Lee played an important role in several committees. As VP of Membership, she recruited many friends to join OCA and reminded people to renew, growing chapter membership. On the Youth Leadership Scholarship committee, she led the revision of essential guidelines for judging scholarship applicants, streamlining the judging and the award announcement processes. Lee was a leader on the networking committee, where she worked with committee members to plan events and proofread event flyers. These new monthly networking events produced a high turnout and led to new members. Lee has quickly become our chapter MVP. She has even involved her 11 year old son Dylan in volunteering, and her family's restaurant caters many of our events, including the upcoming NBM.

Lee was a consistent figure in many OCA chapter events. She started as a mentee in MAAP in 2015, when she identified public speaking as her biggest fear. From that, she joined a public speaking competition at her community college where she placed 1st at regionals and then 2nd at nationals. From there, she joined our board. She showcased her cultural knowledge by setting up a crafting booth to teach kids crafts and origami at the Gateway Dragonboat Festival. This booth also served as an outreach place for OCA St. Louis. With her artistic talents, she played an important role in setting up table design for our annual fundraising gala in 2017. The beautiful table design with a lantern became one of the memorable items to the gala participants. This enticed some gala participants to come back for the next time.

As a single mom who worked 3 jobs, she would have liked to attend the OCA National events, but had not had the flexibility until recently, when she got 1 job, and will be past her 6 month probation. Given her past contributions to OCA, she deserves to be honored as an Unsung Hero at the OCA National Convention in 2018. This award would provide a trip package that will enable her to attend the convention. We want her to be empowered at the convention and to bring back new ideas to improve our chapter.

Written by OCA - St. Louis Chapter leadership: Lucy Burns, President, and Caroline Fan, Immediate Past President.

UNSUNG HEROES



GRACE PAN is one of two co-chairs for the Westchester County Asian American Heritage Festival. Our largest OCA event, the festival attracts 5,000-7,000 attendees from around the region each year and requires a huge amount of planning and organization to make it successful. Grace is deeply involved in so many aspects of this effort. She is the vendor outreach coordinator, the creator and publisher of the festival program book, the youth program coordinator and the on-site coordinator and troubleshooter during the event. 2017 was the fourth year she has been doing this, devoting many dozens of hours each year to make it a success.

Grace was also the co-chair of our annual Dynamic Achievers Award Gala in 2016 and 2017. Our major fundraising event, Grace is heavily involved in critical gala activities. She is the gala journal coordinator, a gala planner and runs the gala itself. The event is successful because of Grace's involvement.

Grace has been involved with one of the major Chinese schools in Westchester for many years. She was a vice principal of the PTA, a math teacher at the school and is also 2017 and 2018 co-chair of the Chinese Family Network of the Horace Mann School, where she lends her expertise to help fellow parents.

Grace always says "yes" when asked to help. No matter what the project or function, she willingly accepts and effectively performs the responsibilities required. When our chapter treasurer became ill in 2016, our president turned to Grace to assume this responsibility. Even though she has a busy professional and personal life, she agreed to be acting treasurer. In 2017, Grace assumed full treasurer responsibilities and enables our chapter to function well financially. Grace has also been a member of the Student Leadership Award committee.

And Grace launched our chapter's first APA-Y workshop for area high school students, which was a big success.

More importantly, both Grace and her husband are heavily involved with the local Chinese community and her actions inspire her entire family to volunteer.

Grace encouraged and supported her husband to become principal of the Huaxia Chinese School. Her children have an exemplary track record due to her – they held leadership positions in the Youth Organization of Chinese and Asian Americans, are MCs at the Asian American Heritage Festival, run the AHF children's activities, helped with Get Out the Vote and voter registration activities, assist with running the Gala and volunteered in many Chinese school activities. They even volunteer at their American school to help acclimate new immigrant families, assist with fundraising and more. Grace has made sure her children will contribute to society for many years to come.

Grace is highly involved in OCA events. She participates in and manages everything from the Rising Stars Concert to the Asian American Heritage Festival and OCA's annual Gala. She is Treasurer and journal editor for multiple events. In short Grace works on events and functions from A to Z. She is reliable, dependable and, most importantly, sets an example for other board members to follow.

Written by OCA - Westchester & Hudson Valley Chapter president, Li Lin.

UNSUNG HEROES

A visionary leader, **CHAO DANNY YANG** is a trailblazer in creating new initiatives and innovative programs to advance OCA-Sacramento Chapter. As one of the projects for the Chapter's Business Advisory Council (BAC) in 2017, Chao helped secure a \$20,000 Career and Work Readiness Grant through AT&T in collaboration with the Chapter to support the career readiness of college students as they enter the workforce. This project, also in partnership with California State University, Sacramento gave students in the 16 weeks course taught by Chao, one academic credit. The focus of the course prepared students to research a problem, identify a solution and presented their research posters at a culminating event to 16 employers. The highlight of the course came students were able to go to JC Penny to purchase professional attire at a deep discount and for many it was their first time to purchase a suit. An example and testament of Chao's commitment to



OCA was that he unselfishly shared his time to help write the proposal, develop the course curriculum and expertise as a university instructor for the course. AT&T National Vice President of External Affairs made the award announcement during the Youth Luncheon at the 2017 National Convention in Sacramento.

In addition, Chao helped bring prominent speakers for the 2017 OCA National Convention workshops including Eva Lee who spoke on Hmong History at the California Railroad Museum on Friday night. He also brought many Sacramento State University Full Circle Project students from underrepresented communities to attend the college leadership track.

A transformative leader, As an on-going support and commitment to OCA-Sacramento, he continues to participate in the Chapter's events from the Anti-Bullying rally to the Reception at the California State capitol and annual membership meeting and dinner. Chao's unrelenting passion to advance the mission of OCA-Sacramento through his extensive and consistent track of service cannot be understood without noting how he first got involved with the Chapter. Chao was instrumental in fostering relationship with California State University, Sacramento and hosted the first and one of the largest APIA-U with over 120 students from 6 universities in the Sacramento region. The success of APIA-U was Chao's first introduction to OCA-Sacramento and the following year he joined as a board of director. During 2016, his first year, Chao was key to secure the "Get out the Vote" (GOTV) campaign. Through his leadership, Chao created the trainings and coordinated 5 organizations totaling 70 people for 4 months who were able to phone bank and contacted 6,500 registered voters. Additionally, Chao has provided support to MAAP program, B3 Leadership summit and the Speak and Lead program. His participation has been invaluable, each time he introduces new people to the local chapter and more importantly students.

Written by OCA - Sacramento Chapter president, Jinky Dolar.

HISTORIC HEROES

By Miriam Yeung, OCA National Vice President of Communications



PATSY TAKEMOTO MINK, the first woman of color elected to Congress, participated in the passage of much of the 1960s Great Society legislation (domestic programs that would eliminate poverty and inequity) during the first phrase of her congressional career. After a long hiatus, Mink returned to the House in the 1990s as an ardent defender of the social welfare state at a time when much of the legislation she had helped establish was being rolled back. As a veteran politician who had a significant impact on the nation during both stints in the U.S. House of Representatives, Mink's legislative approach was premised on the belief that representation extended beyond the borders of one's congressional district, "You were not elected to Congress, in my interpretation of things, to represent your district..." she once noted. "...you are national legislators."

Patsy Matsu Takemoto was born in Paia, Hawaii Territory on December 6, 1927, one of two children raised by Suematsu Takemoto, a civil engineer and Mitama Tateyama Takemoto. She graduated from Maui High School in 1944 as class president and valedictorian and went on to attend Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and the University of Nebraska at Lincoln before graduating with a BA in zoology and chemistry from the University of Hawaii in 1948. Mink originally planned to pursue a medical degree, but turned to law school after several medical schools turned down her application. Three years later, she earned a JD from the University of Chicago Law School, the first Hawaiian Nisei woman to do so. In 1951 she married John Francis Mink, a graduate student in geology at the university. The couple had one child, a daughter named Gwendolyn, and moved to Honolulu. Facing discrimination from bigger firms due to her interracial marriage, Patsy T. Mink went into private law practice and lectured on business law at the University of Hawaii. In 1954 Mink founded the Oahu Young Democrats and worked as an attorney for the territorial senate, where she served from 1958 to 1959.

Throughout her political career, Mink remained true to her liberal ideals. Previously in the majority both in her party affiliation and her political ideology she often found herself in the minority during her second stretch in the House. Mink never had a warm relationship with the state leaders of her party; she attributed their lack of support to her unwillingness to allow the party to influence her political agenda. Despite electoral setbacks, Mink did return to public office and was subsequently appointed to various committees. Mink maintained a focus on national issues, especially those affecting Asian Pacific Americans (APA) and the Pacific region. She fought to preserve family reunification provisions in several proposed immigration reform bills and worked to educate Americans about the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Mink also advocated many women's issues in congress, including equal rights, Title IX of the Education Amendment that opened opportunities for women in athletics and she continued to pursue legislative reform in health care and education (childcare bill, bilingual education, special education, professional sabbaticals for teachers and Head Start). She was a critic of the welfare overhaul legislation in 1996 and raised concerns about the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that might undermine civil liberties by violating the privacy of American citizens in the name of national security.



In May 1994, Mink joined Representative Norman Mineta of California and other colleagues in forming the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

On September 28, 2002, after a month-long hospitalization with pneumonia, Patsy T. Mink died in Honolulu, Hawaii. Her name remained on the November ballot and she was re-elected by a wide margin. Shortly after Mink's death, John Boehner of Ohio, chairman of the Education and the Workforce Committee, reflected upon Mink's congressional service: "Patsy Mink was a vibrant, passionate, and effective voice for the principles she believed in. Her passing is a significant loss for our committee, the people of Hawaii and the people of the United States."

HISTORIC HEROES

BECAUSE HE WAS ONE OF US A REMEMBRANCE OF SAN FRANCISCO MAYOR EDWIN MAH LEE (1952 - 2017) *Written by Claudine Cheng*

In the morning of December 12, 2017, San Franciscans woke up in shock over the news of Mayor Lee's unexpected passing. This tragic loss was mourned not only by those of us living in the City, but also by public officials and community leaders throughout the country as well as abroad.

Mayor Lee grew up in public housing with five siblings in Seattle where his father was a cook in a family restaurant and his mother a seamstress. He received a full scholarship to attend Bowdoin College in Maine. After he earned his law degree at the University of California, Berkeley, Mayor Lee started his career as a staff attorney at the Asian Law Caucus fighting for affordable housing and justice for immigrant communities and the underserved.



Over the past forty years, Mayor Lee has dedicated himself to public service in San Francisco. He has served as the head of key City departments including the Human Rights Agency, the City Purchaser's Office, the Department of Public Work and subsequently, an appointment to the position of Chief Administrator. When former Mayor Gavin Newsom won the election for Lieutenant Governor of the State of California, Mayor Lee was appointed Interim Mayor. In 2011, he ran and won the election to be 43rd Mayor of the City and Country of San Francisco, the City's first Mayor of Chinese American descent.

Within a few short years, Mayor Lee has placed San Francisco on the map as a city that welcomes business and creates jobs. Many major technology companies have established headquarters and offices in San Francisco and they include Salesforce, Twitter, Facebook and Google, to name a few. In addition, Mayor Lee also implemented many effective public policies that addressed urban issues such as affordable housing and homelessness.

While Mayor Lee's passing was a great loss to San Francisco, it was a greater loss to the Asian American community. Mayor Lee has always been a champion for the immigrant and underserved communities. He began his career fighting for affordable housing in Chinatown and he understood the needs of the community. He has made himself accessible to the Asian American community in a manner that no other Mayor has done before, because he was one of us.

Because he was one of us, Mayor Lee understood the need to open doors of opportunities to Asian Americans pursuing careers in public service. Under Mayor Lee's stewardship, there was a visible increase in Asian Americans working in the Office of the Mayor, including two Deputy Chief of Staffs with significant responsibilities. Much like OCA taking pride in our summer internship and leadership development programs, Mayor Lee shared the same vision of nurturing the next generation of leaders.

Because he was one of us, Mayor Lee understood the importance of having Asian Pacific Americans at the table where public policies are debated and legislations are adopted. He has often given generously of his time and headlining fundraising events when Asian American candidates from across the country reached out and asked for support. Mayor Lee knew what community empowerment was all about and he was able to help strengthen the Asian American voice.

Because he was one of us, Mayor Lee understood the importance of celebrating and promoting appreciation of Asian Pacific Americans' diverse cultural heritage. With his support, the annual official celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month has evolved to be one of San Francisco's civic traditions, joining a number of other ethnic festivals celebrated in the City.

And, because he was one of us, Mayor Lee appreciated the mission and work of Asian American organizations such as OCA. Over the years, he has accepted OCA's invitations whenever his schedule permitted, including speaking as a panelist in the State of the America Summit at the National Convention in Las Vegas. In 2015 when the National Convention was in San Francisco, he spoke at the Opening Ceremony as well as attended the Gala, making sure that all of OCA's members and guests receive the warmest welcome.

By the way, Mayor Lee was a fan of the Lunar New Year commemorative stamps. Regardless of whether San Francisco was designated by the United States Postal Service as the venue for the First Date of Issuance, we would always have an event in the City featuring the stamp during which Mayor Lee would remind everyone of OCA's role in making that happen.

Mayor Lee will be missed. The community has lost a remarkable champion and many of us have lost a friend. The truth is that beyond all his achievements in the political realm, Mayor Lee has been revered as a very down to earth, humble and genuinely nice man. I believe the best way to honor his legacy is to carry forward the lessons we have learned from him and through him.

Claudine Cheng was a former National President and a former San Francisco Bay Chapter President.

EVERYDAY HEROES

By Kham Moua, former OCA Associate Director of Policy and Advocacy



EMILIO GONZALES, Executive Director for Public Policy & Strategic Alliances at Verizon, is a champion for our community. Of his long list of accolades, one of the most important has been his role as one of the key individuals connecting our public schools and libraries with affordable access to the Internet and educational technologies. His work in helping to design and implement programs like E-Rate (single largest federal investment in educational technology ever) has connected 99% of our nation's public schools and libraries. Many Asian American and Pacific Islander students who don't have broadband at home rely on these anchor institutions to complete their homework, apply for college, jobs, or search for grants and so much more.

Verizon was recently awarded the Bridge Builder Award by Advancing Justice – AAJC. Emilio received the award on behalf of Verizon while sharing his thoughts on how the thoughtful application of new technologies can help Asian American communities leverage game changing technologies for educational, social, civic and economic development.

"Emilio genuinely cares about the wellbeing of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities," said Kenneth L. Lee, Chief Executive Officer of OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates. "He is a passionate advocate for our community. The impact of his work cannot be overstated and the support he and Verizon are providing to the community will have a lasting and positive impact on OCA and the broader AAPI movement."

Emilio and Verizon sit firmly at the intersection of corporate responsibility by providing AAPI; civil and human rights organizations, LGBTQ and other communities critical resources necessary to promote their communities, develop capacity and advance their inalienable rights. Emilio and Verizon have been instrumental in pushing for comprehensive immigration reform and advocating for a bipartisan permanent pathway to citizenship for DREAMers. Advocating once again on behalf of our community, Verizon filed an amicus brief in opposing the Administration's travel ban.

In a conversation with OCA, Emilio stated that, "my passion for and commitment to the AAPI community is personal and runs deep." Emilio added that he grateful and feels "fortunate to be able to work for Verizon; a great company with wonderful people committed to diversity, inclusion and making a meaningful difference in the places where we live, work and beyond. We build really cool, world – class networks and we do so with a sense that's it is critical that we share the benefits to with shareholders, customers, suppliers, nonprofits and with communities in need wherever they may be."

Prior to Verizon, Emilio served an appointee in the Clinton Administration as a Special Advisor for Technology. He also worked in the U.S. Congress as a Senior Analyst at the U.S. Congressional Office of Technology Assessment. Emilio lives in Washington, DC with his wife Lori and his two daughters, Jade and Jordan.

EVERYDAY HEROES

My everyday hero is grandmother. She is a strong matriarch in my family who pushes us to be our best. She also is always there to help us whenever we need her and will do whatever she can in her power to support us. She has been through so much since she was a little girl growing up and taking care of her sister and immigrating to the USA and taking care of her children. She has worked her entire life and I hope to be as strong as her someday.

- Stephanie Wong
Chapter & Membership Manager, OCA National

He would be by her side as she swept the floor a third or fourth time and afterwards as she washed her hands an eighth or ninth. When she could not leave the house, he would go to bring her food. When she could not touch the plastic carry out bags, he would cook for her. As my grandmother would struggle against her mind and her illness each and every day, he would always be there. Patient. Understanding. Full of love unconditional. My everyday hero was my grandfather, and I miss him very much.

- Andrew Lo
Programs Manager, OCA National

My everyday hero is my mom and all the people who assume this role as a "mom" to their children who sacrifice so much to ensure their well-being. Becoming a young woman has helped me understand only half of the things that my mother did to ensure that I had the best my siblings and I could have. She achieved it under such immense pressure and through so many challenges but she remained resilient and did it with grace. She's overwhelmingly kind, smart, passionate, and successful despite all the barriers she faced. I owe my resilience and grit to her, and to all the moms out there doing it all for themselves and their children.

- Pajouablai Monica Lee
Associate Director of Programs, OCA National

My everyday hero is my little sister. While I've moved halfway across the country to pursue my career, she has had to assume the role as the oldest (and only) child that my parents rely on for help with technology or calling internet customer service. At fourteen years old, she has taken over my role in the family nail salon as the receptionist and manages the aunties who work for us while our mother is busy. Alongside all this, she continues to develop her drawing and dancing while maintaining amazing grades. Her tenacity and dedication is comforting as well as inspiring for me.

- Thu Nguyen
Senior Communications Associate, OCA National

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