

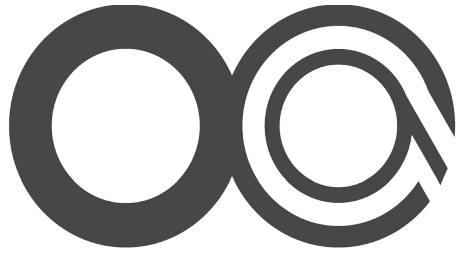
DREAM

fighting

TO UNITE
together

IMAGEO@

Fall/Winter 2017 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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DREAMing Together

Table of Contents

- 4 From the Board
- 5 Immigrants Make Houston Strong
- 8 Corporate Achievement Awards
- 10 Dreamers Continue to Fight
- 12 Telling Stories Through Authentic
Home Cuisines
- 16 What Can We Say? It's OCA-GLA!



Greetings Advocates!

As we close out another year and prepare for 2018, it is important to remember the challenges but also the triumphs of 2017. Despite such a tumultuous year, our spirit is as strong as ever to keep moving forward. We have seen this through the hurricane recovery in Houston, the constantly growing movement to protect DREAMers, and rising stars in the entertainment and food industry.

Our 2017 End-of-Year Campaign, “Build Future Leaders,” draws on this strength and hope. The future of OCA’s work lies in leaders and community advocates, for which we develop a pipeline through our internship and fellowship programs. With your continued support, we can continue to change the lives of students from across the nation by giving them the opportunity to work and learn in Washington, DC.

Join me in 2018 in making our communities more equitable and strong. Thank you for being a part of OCA. We look forward to doing great things.

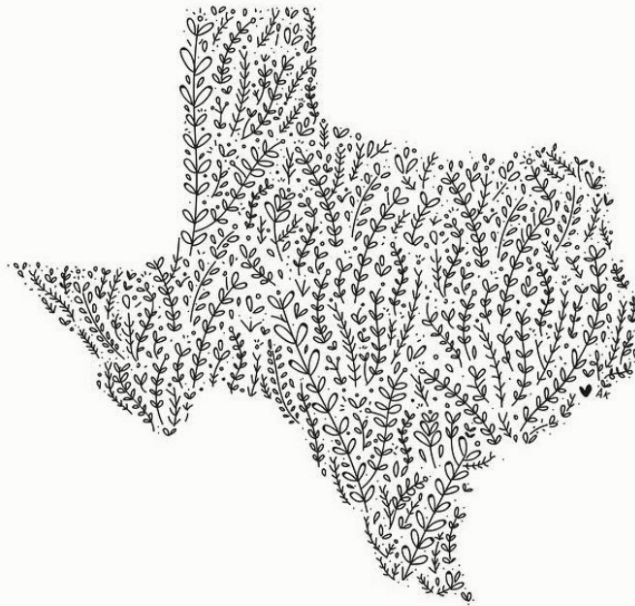
Seasons greetings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon M. Wong". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Sharon M Wong
National President

Immigrants Make Houston Strong

c/o: @withloveak



STAY STRONG
HOUSTON

Photos and stories from Angry Asian Man, Houston Chronicle, Steven Wu, and Debbie Chen



Hurricane Harvey gave the city one of its first “immigrant experience[s],” as Judy Le put it. As the storm dumped 9 trillion gallons of water onto the city, Houston flooded everywhere and anywhere. One stranger joked that Harvey was “the great equalizer.” Neighborhoods both rich and poor were affected, and people from all parts of town scrambled to evacuate at the last minute or depended on others to come and lift/lift them to safety.

While everyone quickly began planning for recovery as soon as they would be able to leave their shelters, others who were mobile sprang into action. Most notably, the Asian American community immediately began serving first responders and collecting donations.

Chinatown and the Ghandi District were spared by the floods, as well as parts of Montrose and Midtown. Angie Dang and Cat Huynh entrusted their kitchen in the hands of other chefs and volunteers who could make it to their place, Les Ba’get. The Dumpling Bros drove their truck down from North Texas and, along with the team from Houston’s crowdfunding darling NextSeed, served over 2,000 meals for relief volunteers and first responders. Multiple South Asian restaurants down Hilcroft were also open to serve first responders on the first day



after the hurricane. As OCA-Greater Houston’s Steven Wu walked me through his days following the hurricane he spoke of the community’s efforts. “I was super impressed and proud of Biryani Pot,” said Wu. “We were driving to the Convention Center to volunteer, and saw their truck going around serving hot meals to first responders and displaced people.”

Pastry chef Dory Fung and her friend Jennifer Do went out to the Starbucks store downtown that Do manages, and packed all the food available to bring to the Convention Center which held over 10,000 evacuees. After seeing the desperate need for help, Fung and Do stayed for several days, working 12 to 14 hours each day, organizing the kitchen and food donations.



On this page, clockwise from top left corner: Inside Les Ba’get as volunteers coordinate food donations; Team from The Dumpling Bros and NextSeed; Jennifer Do and Dory Fung with first responders as they deliver Starbucks.



On this page, left to right: OCA-Greater Houston volunteers who were part of the initial wave of recovery efforts; OCA-GH and UniPro volunteers pose with food donations from H-Mart.



Leaders of the AAPI community knew there would be a surge of call for aid. To make sure their community would be properly assisted, and to relieve the City of Houston of some of the burden, BPSOS and OCA-Greater Houston started legal aid and fundraising as soon as their volunteers were free and mobile. OCA-GH secured a large donation from H-Mart which aided both the Houston AAPI community, as well as the ones along the Gulf Coast. Their AAPI Community Relief Fund has been in use for securing personnel for recovery efforts and advocacy during the rebuilding process.

Relief response does not end with legal aid and rebuilding homes, but also ensuring that marginalized folks also stand to benefit and

are protected. Discrimination became clear to Wu when he observed the debris pickup in Third Ward, East Downtown, and the Eastside of Houston (generally low-income and development areas) was much slower than in the wealthier neighborhoods of Bellaire and the Westside.

Though the Houstonian response to immediate disaster relief was immensely generous, the immigrant and other minority communities are now concerned about the recovery process. As Houston reexamines its city planning and begins to contract for new structures and communities, Debbie Chen of OCA-GH is working to ensure the marginalized also get a seat at the planning table.

“The America I know can see the humanity in others. The America I know recognizes the desperation of losing your home, navigating a life of lost dreams and celebrating the unwavering will to rebuild that life with new dreams. It is the America that will open our doors for the huddled masses.”

- Judy Le for the Houston Chronicle

UPS CEO David Abney Accepts OCA's Corporate Partner of the Year Award



award meant to UPS.

On a warm fall evening on late October in a packed ballroom in downtown Washington, DC, UPS Chief Executive Officer David Abney spoke to AAPI community members, corporate citizens, OCA's leadership, and on the value of its partnership with OCA. He was accepting the 2017 OCA National Corporate Partner of the Year Award on behalf of UPS, a major supporter of OCA.

As the recipient of the 2017 OCA National Corporate Achievement Award, UPS flew in some of its most prominent organizational figures including UPS' Foundation President Eduardo Martinez, the company's Asian Business Resource Group (BRG) chairs, and District Managers. After receiving the award, Abney spoke to the crowd about what this

“For companies like mine, this means asking the tough questions: Are we seeing diversity in our leadership positions? Are we developing diverse candidates and giving them the additional responsibility they need to become leaders? Are we making sure they progress in their careers?”

These words ring true. In a 2011 study by the Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc. (LEAP), it is reported that only 2 percent of executive officers at Fortune 500 companies were of API descent. In addition, only 79 total companies in the Fortune 500 had API representation at the executive officer letter.

Since 1991, UPS has been a supporter of OCA,



Diversity without inclusion is a check-the-box initiative. It's getting credit without earning it.

- David Abney,
UPS Chief Executive Officer



producing many community leaders along the way including some of the leadership of the organization. “I have seen firsthand their commitment to diversity and inclusion,” says OCA CEO Ken Lee, a 37-year veteran of the company. “In 1971, a recruiter approached me and my friends to consider a career with the company, and in turn hiring a diverse work force. The rest is history, but without their commitment to diversity and inclusion and taking a chance on a Chinese American kid from San Francisco, I wouldn’t be where I am today.”

UPS supports OCA’s Mentoring Asian American Professionals (MAAP) Program, AAPI Diverse Women’s Initiative, OCA-UPS Gold Mountain Scholarship, National Convention, and Corporate Achievement Awards. This is the second time that UPS has won the award since being the inaugural Corporate Partner of the Year in 2001.

In closing his speech, Abney had high praises for OCA. “We need you. We need your advocacy,” said Abney. “We need your reminder that the cause of diversity and inclusion is unfinished business.”

DREAMers Continue to Fight

By Thu Nguyen and Kham Moua

2017 DREAM/DACA TIMELINE

June: Bipartisan DREAM Act introduced, which would allow DREAMers to work and live in the U.S. legally and provide a pathway to citizenship.

July: H.R. 3003 and 3004 pass, allowing federal grants to be taken away from cities that declared themselves as “sanctuary cities,” and heightened criminal sentences for undocumented immigrants trying to enter the U.S.

August: Introduction of RAISE Act, which would cut immigration through a meritocracy system and reduce family immigration.



A DREAMER'S STORY

My name is Ivy Teng. My family came to the United States when I was seven years old. I was born in Macao, China, a beautiful Portuguese-influenced Chinese city. I'd tell my friends about how fast the city grew and brag about the bridges, the landmarks—all of which I read about but never experienced. It was my only way of “connecting” to the birth place that I had not visited in 18 years and felt very little connection.

The truth is, it took a lot for my parents to uproot our entire family. We arrived at JFK on August 26, 1998. After our tourist visa expired, we continued to live in America. Being undocumented has been one of the biggest challenges in life—the phrase “living in the shadow” is very accurate way of describing our way of life. We never caused trouble, never asked for more than what we were given, and were perpetually afraid to attract anyone's attention. My family would send more than half their paycheck back to China and keep the rest for living expenses. For us living in the US allowed us to pay my grandpa's medical bills for all the years we've lived in America and contribute more to our family's success in China.

Junior year in high school, the principal set up appointments with each student to lay out post-graduation options. I considered saying thank you and leaving without telling her the truth, but eventually, I said, “I'm not supposed to be here.” To my surprise, I was not the only one in school. She didn't tell me their names, but the fact that I knew there were classmates just like me made me feel empowered. There were very few schools and scholarships that didn't require legal status at the time. I decided to apply for the best city university we could afford and was fortunate enough to be accepted. I worked random part-time jobs to pay for my tuition and expenses, and with the help of my family, I graduated with a BA in Communications minoring in Mathematics.

Immigrant youth who are brought to the U.S. at a young age have become integral parts of this country. But being undocumented and all of the consequences that come with that can make you feel like you might not have a future. DACA changed that. I was able to intern to gain work experience and then was finally accepted to a full-time competitive rotation program at one of the largest advertising holding companies. I have since worked in various Fortune 500 companies and have assimilated to the life that I never thought I would have. A badge, a phone and email address assigned just for me means so much more to me than the means to entering a building or a telecommunication tool—it's a constant reminder that I have a status, and my existence is meaningful. This would have never been possible without DACA.



August: 5th Anniversary of DACA

September: Termination of DACA Program, triggering the start of mass deportation of undocumented immigrants.

December

FACT CHECK

There are **1.7 MILLION** AAPI undocumented immigrants.

They are **FROM:** India, China, Philippines, South Korea, Vietnam, Pakistan, other Asian countries.

1 OUT OF 8 ASIANS in California are undocumented.

1 OUT OF 6 ASIANS in Texas are undocumented.

1 out of 7 Asian immigrants are undocumented.

What happens if the DREAM Act

PASSES

Though this will be a great win for immigrants and advocates, this would not be the end of rallying for immigration reform. There is a massive visa backlog that must be addressed, along with the policies regarding criminalization of immigrants such as HR3004 that need to be removed. We will continue to move forward with advocating for comprehensive immigration reform.

DOESN'T PASS

Two things: 1. we must continue to advocate for a comprehensive immigration reform bill, but 2. also make sure that undocumented immigrants understand their rights when confronted by law enforcement. Senator Cornyn (R-TX) has hinted that they will try to visit DACA again in January.



Telling Stories Through Authentic Home Cuisines

Written by Monica Lee

Storytelling is an integral part of the Hmong culture. Since there wasn't an official alphabet until roughly the early 1950s, traditions and stories were typically passed down from generation to generation through storytelling and stitch work on traditional Hmong clothes and tapestries. Today, more and more Hmong American millennials are finding new and innovative ways to tell their stories.

As a Hmong refugee from the mountains of Laos who grew up in the Midwest all his life, Noobtsa Phillip Vang never expected to help tell people's stories, let alone start his own business. Having grown up in a poor family, Vang saw firsthand some of the failed businesses that his family members went through so he never wanted to venture into that industry at all. He thought he would maybe work at the World Bank or do some social impact work after he got his MBA degree. However, one fall semester course during his MBA program at Georgetown University changed that perspective for him completely.

"You have to have the next big idea. Focus on what you love, learn about it, talk to people, and, by learning everything you can about it, you can figure out what the problems and gaps are. That's where the next big idea comes from. That's the entrepreneurial mindset," as told to Vang from his professor in his introduction to entrepreneurship class. Over the next few days, Vang was eager to discover what problems existed and how could he solve them. After a few long nights, far away from home which is in Minnesota, Vang found himself hungry and craving for his mother's home cooked Hmong meals but there was no Hmong food or grocery stores nearby at all. That's when it hit him, "What if we could eat home-cooked foods here in DC; what if we could get it anywhere?"

Vang realized that it was his aunties and grandmas who would cook the large feasts back home - and it was their cooking he missed most. He also thought about his mom, who came to the US as a Hmong political refugee following the Secret War in Laos in 1976. She couldn't speak English when she first arrived



so she didn't have many opportunities to excel professionally, but she cooked delicious foods. Vang thought of the problems he could solve by connecting immigrant and refugee cooks with the right resources to reach their full potential and thus, the idea of Foodhini was born.

After many trials and error and lots of long days and nights during his final MBA year, Vang founded Foodhini, a delivery food-service company that delivers authentic homemade meals to the greater Washington, DC region by employing immigrant and refugee chefs to cook foods from their native cultures. When Foodhini launched in 2016, he started with one chef and only four dishes that were delivered four days a week. It's now grown to deliver meals throughout the weekdays and employs six refugee and immigrant chefs from various countries who cook cuisines that are Lao, Syrian, Tibetan, Filipino, and Persian. "We want to deliver authentic home-cooked meals but also deliver real stories from our chefs. We want our customers to really know who's cooking their meals" Vang said. Each delivered meal comes with a personal note from the chef themselves,

detailing instructions on how to eat the meal, but also where the meal comes from and how it's meaningful to the chef.

Vang hopes to continue to grow the company to a bigger kitchen with more chefs, expanding service to the entire DMV region, the east coast, and hopefully across the country. "It's grown into something big and amazing and that means we get to impact tons of lives and communities. That's where we want to be, and we're showing that this type of work can be successful. I don't see myself doing anything else," Vang said.

Something similar can be said for Minnesota based Union Kitchen owner, Yia Vang. Yia moved to America four years after he was born in the Ban Vinai refugee camp in Thailand post the Secret War in Laos. After several years of moving around and growing up in the midwest, Yia didn't start off with many aspira-



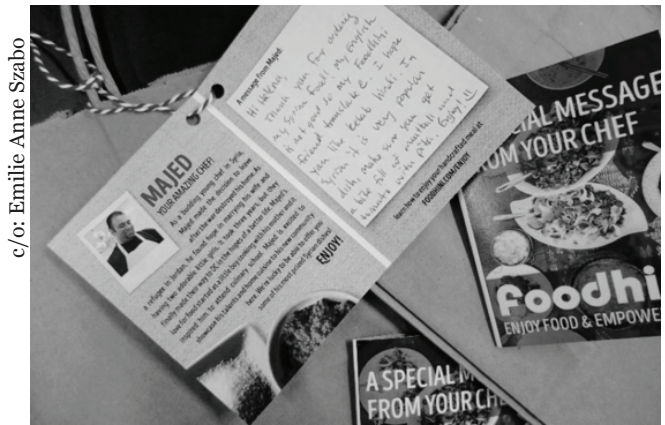
tions aside from becoming a teacher or maybe a football coach after playing football in high school. "Nothing really interested me, and school didn't make sense. But food was essential and that made sense to me."

Midway through his undergraduate career

at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, Yia took a break to learn more about the food and restaurant industry nearby his campus. Yia shared how he went through an identity crisis during that period. He always felt weird having to explain himself to people when he was asked where he came from or what his nationality was. “I told my mom I never wanted to cook Asian food because I wanted to stay away from that; it wasn’t cool and hard to explain to people,” Yia said. After a couple years of working in various kitchens, Yia went back to finish his degree at UW-LaCrosse and then settled in the Twin Cities of Minnesota where he re-discovered his love for Hmong food and realized how he could share his stories through food.

Yia went from working in a catering company for a couple years, to managing the kitchen of a community church, to working in a few restaurants with high-end culinary chefs who fed wealthy customers. Yia finally felt what it meant to create big meals to feed large groups and how to apply the hospitality values that his parents

“When people ask me where I get my sense of identity as a person with no country of my own, I tell them it’s from our food”



instilled in him. “Cooking is more than putting food on a plate, it’s a deep connection to the people you feed. I turned 30 and thought, ‘do I want to be here forever, making food for rich people? I got this hunger to do more,” said Yia. So he left his job and started a food pop-up in the metro area of the Twin Cities.

First a harmless joke for Yia and his business partner Chris Her, ‘Union Kitchen’ then became the name of their pop-up. The project is a representation of what unites a Hmong house; for Yia, it was always the kitchen and the food that brought his family together. “We believe that where food is made and served, hospitality is also tied

- Yia Vang

into all of that. A kitchen can be anywhere you want to cook and bring people together, said Yia.”

Yia described how he remembered his father’s stories about their families and traditions back in Laos so he inherited that trait of



a storyteller too. “When people ask me where I get my sense of identity as a person with no country of my own, I tell them it’s from our food - the tapestry of where we’ve settled and where we’ve been. It’s no longer just about the food and it eventually becomes about the people. The food that we eat is our story of where we’ve been and where we’re going,” Yia said. “How do we write our story here so the next Hmong generation of cooks can write their own stories too? I want the majority people to have a better understanding of Hmong people and Hmong food instead of us being this niche community or just remnants of the Vietnam War.”

Yia and Chris launched their first pop-up dinner in February of 2017 and fed over 240 customers that day. Now they’re hosting events, pop-ups, catering, and Hmong cuisine cooking classes, while working to open up their own brick and mortar so they can cook and share Hmong American foods daily. Eventually, Yia hopes to open another restaurant that features traditional American foods with a twist derived from his own interpretations, “As much as I am Hmong, we are Midwesterners too so I want to tie in American foods to show our

Vang thought of the problems he could solve by connecting immigrant and refugee cooks with the right resources to reach their full potential and thus, the idea of Foodhini was born.

culture and people are always progressing and changing,” Yia said.

To learn more about these entrepreneurs and their businesses:

Foodhini Founder and CEO Noobtsa Phillip Vang can be reached at info@foodhini.com for those who are interested in supporting their mission or visit the website at www.foodhini.com to learn more.

Union Kitchen Minnesota Co-Founder Yia Vang can be reached at yia@unionkitchen.com for those interested in supporting their efforts or visit the website www.unionkitchenmn.com to learn more.





What Can We Say? It's OCA-GLA!

Written by Stephanie Wong

OCA is incredibly proud of all the work its chapters accomplish. Every year we are continually amazed at the impact that chapters across the country have in their community through their events and achievements. We decided this year to highlight and feature one chapter in particular for surpassing all expectations in terms of the work they have done these past few months: Greater Los Angeles!

The OCA – Greater Los Angeles (OCA-GLA) chapter is based in the heart of California. Made up of a robust team that is comprised of an executive board and permanent staff, OCA-GLA has been able to establish a great working rhythm as well as expand their team even further to have a larger impact on the Los Angeles Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. OCA-GLA has had many successes but one in particular really stands out. This past year, OCA-GLA was successful in securing the Next-Gen American grant. This grant focuses on civic engagement and gave OCA-GLA the tools to establish new programs. The grant was specifically used by OCA-GLA to establish the Trisector Fellowship Program. The mission of the fellowship

is to develop a generation of leaders who further the AAPI community, whose baseline values are intentional and collaborative across all three sectors, and ensures a leadership pipeline. The fellowship program selects 15 Advocates from three different sectors: nonprofit, government, and private business, and selects 5 Advocates from each. This allows participants to get a well-rounded experience from their fellow Advocates who come from different sectors outside of their own.

The Trisector Fellowship Program has already taken off and has been a hit in the community. Fellows have held voter registration events on campuses, in classrooms, and have made a splash on social media. Make sure to check out OCA-GLA's Facebook and Instagram to meet the Fellows themselves. The 2017 OCA-GLA Civic Engagement Fellows who were selected for this class all have a passion for getting people civically involved.

Benjamin Tran, a 2017 OCA-GLA Civic Engagement Fellow, from UC Irvine who represents the Orange County area believes that, "Is it import-

ant that all citizens exercise their right to vote [...] by voting we're continuing to expand the amount of people who have been given these opportunities as well as ensuring them for future prosperity. It is my goal to register 100 voters by December 31st."

Paul Yeh, another 2017 OCA-GLA Fellow, and a senior at Mark Keppel High School, represents the San Gabriel Valley. He says, "As a young citizen, I am able to have a say on the decisions our system makes which will impact many aspects of our daily lives. Growing up I have witnessed that there are many people who have been underrepresented, especially those with language barriers, disabilities, and most importantly, young voters. It is paramount that our community is aware that there are many unregistered voters out there that do not get a chance to share their stories, opinions, and values." Yeh also has the goal of registering a 100 voters by December 31, 2017. We are all very excited to see the amazing work that the Fellows and OCA-GLA achieve!



OCA-GLA has also been able to further their goals of civic engagement by recently hiring two Civic Engagement Field Specialists: Alicia Estrada and Kurt Ikeda. Estrada is a LA Native with a passion for advocating for disadvantaged populations. Ikeda is a former educator, spoken word poet, and hopes to actualize Paulo Freire's idea that education is never a neutral process, but a political process. These two individuals will be managing the Civic Engagement Fellowship program. Congratulations on joining the OCA Family!

OCA-GLA also hosts many successful events throughout the year. They recently hosted their 26th Annual IMAGE Awards, which is a banquet that brings together the GLA community and awards several deserving AAPI individuals who have made a significant impact. This year's awards ceremony was held at Ocean Star restaurant and boasted about 230 guests in attendance. Their attendees were comprised of the OCA – GLA board, the event honorees, community partners such as AAJC and CAUSE, and chapter members.

The awardees this year were Anthony Yom for the Rising Star Award, Tuesday Night Project for the Community Impact Award, Kelly Hu for the Pioneer in Entertainment Award, Michael




Fong, a former board member, was awarded the Public Service Award, and Angela Oh was awarded the Legacy Award.

Congratulations to the awardees!

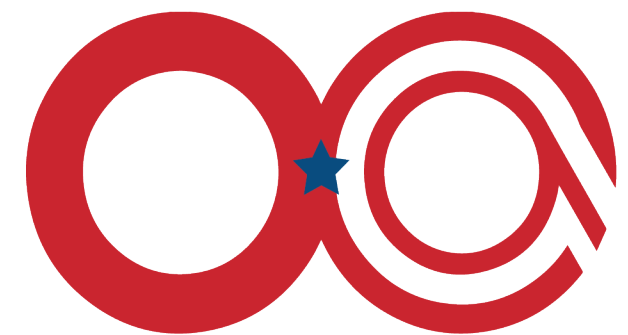
Amongst all the annual events and cosponsors with community partners, OCA-GLA keeps themselves busy with great events, but one event in particular that Jennifer Chau, the OCA-GLA Executive Director, is most excited about is their “Unpacking our Biases” workshop. This workshop was developed by OCA-GLA and was premiered very recently. The workshop tackles issues such as, how to be an ally to different groups, recognizing stereotypes that we have towards these groups, questioning where we learned them, and why we feel the way we feel about different groups. The first premiere of this workshop was so successful that OCA-GLA has

been asked to facilitate this workshop for the IW Group’s staff. Chau said she is excited to see where this workshop might take off in the future and hopes that this can be a curriculum that is shared with different chapters or perhaps becomes a traveling program from OCA-GLA. These are just a few drops in the sea of accomplishments that OCA-GLA has achieved this past year. OCA National would like to thank OCA-GLA for all their hard work and would also like to recognize Jennifer Chau for her dedication and service to our organization. We would like to wish you the best of luck on your future endeavors and the next chapter of your life. We also hope you don’t forget that OCA is never too far wherever you go!

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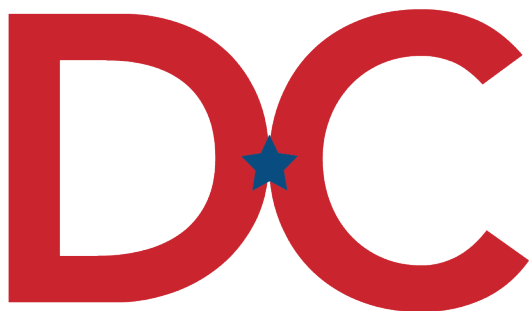
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