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Chinese American Citizens Alliance

~ National ~

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National Lodge
ESTABLISHED 1895

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APAHM 2020: C.A.C.A. Champions Asian American Achievements in the Age of COVID 19

San Francisco, May 6, 2020 — The month of May is designated the 42nd celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage. In June 1977, a resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives proclaimed the first 10 days of May for celebrating the achievements and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in the United States. Shortly after, a Joint Resolution from the House and Senate established the beginnings of APAHM as an annual celebration.

Two landmark events helped to launch public recognition of AAPI achievements in May: the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the United States on May 7, 1843, and the completion of the first U.S. Transcontinental Railroad on May 10, 1869, where Chinese railroad workers were the major labor force on the western leg of the total 1,776-mile route that linked the west and east coasts and contributed to America's growth as a world economic power.

Observances will be noted with both cheer and solemnity, inextricable themes that form the Asian American narrative. The march of progress is not without costly struggles for acceptance in American society.

With the country on virtual lockdown, APAHM 2020 will begin on a somber note given the spread of COVID 19. Public gatherings and official ceremonies across the country are cancelled in order to help stem the spread of infection. A disturbing outcome of the outbreak has been the rise of racism wrongly directed against people of Asian descent. With the first reported COVID 19 outbreak being from China, Asian Americans have become victims of verbal and physical attacks based on an unfounded blame for the pandemic. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to overlook the long shadow of societal and institutional bigotry.

“Asians, particularly Chinese Americans, are not strangers to virulent forms of discrimination and we again find ourselves as targets of xenophobic anger because the earliest cases of Coronavirus infection are traced back to China,” explains Melanie Chan, national president of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance (C.A.C.A.). “The month of May presents opportunities to highlight achievements and also bring our awareness and opposition to these wrongful anti-Asian American attacks.”



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C.A.C.A. National encourages its membership to confront hate by taking steps in making racist behavior unacceptable by becoming instruments of vigilance and education. C.A.C.A. chapters could assist hate victims connect with local, state and federal law enforcement since underreporting of attacks against Asian Americans and Asian immigrant communities impede accurate assessment and assignment of personnel and resources to address the problem effectively.

“COVID 19 will not dampen efforts to honor our community through purpose and solidarity,” says President Chan. “APAHM affords us the opportunity to herald the latest addition to the canon of important milestones for Chinese Americans: the recognition by the U.S. Congress late last year for Gold Medal recognition of the 20,000 men and women of Chinese ancestry who fought for the U.S. during the Second World War at a time when exclusion legislation denied them the rights and benefits of citizenship until 1943.” For more information about the Congressional Gold Medal Recognition of Chinese American WWII Veterans, visit caww2.org.

While many public events have been shelved due to the COVID 19 menace, the themes of APAHM find audiences on other platforms. Premiering May 11 and 12 on Public Television, *Asian Americans* is a five-hour film series that will highlight the contributions and challenges of the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. A collaboration of a team of Asian American filmmakers, the program examines the significant role of Asian Americans in shaping American history and identity. Check your local PBS stations for dates and times. Visit www.pbs.org/show/asian-americans/

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Web: www.CACAnational.org
Chinese American Citizens Alliance

The Chinese American Citizens Alliance, established in 1895, is among the oldest civil rights organizations in the United States. Headquartered in San Francisco with chapter/lodges in Albuquerque (NM), Boston (MA), Chicago (IL), Greater San Gabriel Valley (CA), Greater New York (NY), Houston (TX), Las Vegas (NV), Los Angeles (CA), Mississippi, Oakland (CA), Orange County (CA), Peninsula (CA), Portland (OR), Phoenix (AZ), Sacramento (CA), Salinas (CA), San Antonio (TX), San Francisco (CA), Seattle (WA) and Washington, D.C., the Alliance addresses issues regarding voter education, political participation, racial discrimination and hate crimes, and supports youth leadership training programs and equal employment opportunities for all Chinese Americans.