

THE ASIAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST

Spring 2026



The Official Newsletter of the Asian
American Psychological Association

Artist: Linh-Yen Hoang

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Spring 2026

THE ASIAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this issue are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the AAPA or the newsletter editorial leadership team.

The Asian American Psychologist is the official newsletter of the Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA) and is published two times annually. The newsletter serves to share perspectives of members and inform the AAPA community of relevant news and events.

For submissions and questions, please email newsletter@aapaonline.org.

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AAPA PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVES



PRESIDENT
DR. DONNA DEMANARIG



VICE PRESIDENT
DR. GLORIA WONG-PADOONGPATT

Having had several leadership positions within the AAPA, I hope to continue the work that I started as Vice President (VP) on top of the initiatives I would like to implement during my presidency. My leadership style is collaborative, coalition-building, and supportive. I believe that an effective leader does not direct from the front but fosters an environment where everyone feels empowered to contribute. I believe in the mantra of leading by example, demonstrating the values we stand for, and cultivating a culture of mutual respect and collaboration.



I, along with my partner on this presidential ticket, Dr. Gloria Wong-Padoongpatt, have laid out a vision for our term:

- We are deeply passionate about our social justice initiatives. In 2024, we reactivated the Social Justice Committee (SJC) that was started by Dr. Karen Suyemoto, and we hope to continue those initiatives during our tenure. Further, we look forward to collaborating on these SJC action items with our comrades both within and outside of the AAPA.
- We intend to work closely with our Ethnic Psychological Association siblings to not only collaborate on social justice efforts but also intentionally build deep connections and community.
- We have championed the AAPA's presence in the community and hope to continue collaborating with local partners on the ground. In this spirit, we plan on assessing the needs of the community and creating initiatives for more accessible mental health care.
- In today's digital age, we want to create a stronger media presence to engage current members and to reach out to potential supporters who share our mission and vision.
- We intend to support our members through community activities such as workshops, CEUs, and mentorship for our students by collaborating with our divisions and partners outside of the organization.

With gratitude,

Dr. Donna Demanarig
Dr. Gloria Wong-Padoongpatt



A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Warmest salutations, and welcome to the Spring 2026 issue of *The Asian American Psychologist*, the official newsletter of the Asian American Psychological Association! We are ecstatic to share with you all another issue filled with announcements, initiatives, and culture within the AAPA community. In 2026, we are celebrating the Year of the Fire Horse. The horse is a powerful symbol of vitality, freedom, and adventure, and is associated with passion, energy, and potential for change. We hope these traits carry on through our vision to embrace the community and field of Asian American psychology.

We are pleased to announce, first and foremost, the 2026-2028 AAPA Newsletter Team in this issue. We are grateful for the several returning team members as well as a new layout member, Sam Greco! Additionally, Alicia Geng, who previously served as a Copy Editor, is now one of the 2026-2028 Co-Editors-in-Chief (Co-EiC), working alongside Linh-Nhu Hoang, who is serving as Co-EiC until 2027. You can read more about each team member's bio on the next page.

The horse is a powerful symbol of vitality, freedom, and adventure, and is associated with passion, energy, and potential for change. We hope these traits carry on through our vision to embrace the community and field of Asian American psychology.



Linh-Nhu Hoang
Senior Editor



Alicia Geng
Junior Editor

We are also excited to include in this issue the presidential initiatives from Drs. Donna Demanarig and Gloria Wong-Padoongpatt, as the new President-Elect and Vice-President-Elect of AAPA, respectively. Along with the new leadership team, some of the outgoing officers of the executive board share with us their lasting thoughts as they have served AAPA. We are thankful for an amazing team and eager to see the collaborative vision of the new team to flourish.

This issue also includes several updates from the Division on Multiracial and Adopted Asian Americans (DMAA), Division on International Students and Professionals (DoISAP), and Division on Southeast Asian Americans (DoSEAA). Events and webinars held by these Divisions provide the continued opportunity for the AAPA community to connect, support, and thrive.



Also in this issue, Dr. Sheetal Siledar-Lee breaks the silence with her moving piece on understanding the mental health impact of dowry demands, honor-based control, and interpersonal abuse in South Asian-heritage communities in the U.S. Martin and Richard Lee return with another edition of their comic *The Other Ones*. The newsletter team is excited to continue to include their comic strip as an ongoing feature in future publications. We are also thrilled again to include Dr. Sue Kim's piece on the exciting updates from the Division on Women (DoW) Digital HerStory Team. Finally, Richard Chang and Regina Tahk, the 2026 AAPA Convention Co-Chairs, announce the upcoming convention theme, *Envisioning Radical Futures Within & Beyond Asian American Psychology*.

As we are reminded of the importance of our work and voices in the field, we hope this issue (and all past and future issues of the Newsletter) is a valuable and meaningful resource. We cannot thank you enough for the continued support from all the contributors and readers of the Newsletter. As you read the beautiful pieces in this issue and become inspired to contribute yourself or join our team, we invite you to watch out for our upcoming emails for future issues or contact us at newsletter@aapaonline.org.

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF?

Are you looking for an opportunity to build on your leadership experience and contribute to our AAPA community in a creative way?

Come join our AAPA Newsletter Team as a Co-Editor in Chief!

If you are interested in this unique and exciting opportunity, please send your CV and/or portfolio to newsletter@aapaonline.org.

Newsletter Team

Linh-Như Hoàng, MA (she/her)

Co-Editor-in-Chief

Linh-Như (she/her) has served the AAPA official newsletter, The Asian American Psychologist, as a copy editor for the past three years and is returning to the team as one of the Co-Editors-in-Chief. She is currently a doctoral student in clinical psychology based in Michigan, with research and clinical interests in integrated behavioral health work with both pediatric and racial/ethnic minority populations. She also works as a master's level psychologist at a private practice and enjoys getting involved and networking with professional organizations such as AAPA, APA, and MPA. Outside of school and work, Linh-Như enjoys reading, paddleboarding, training in muay thai, playing tennis, and spending time with loved ones.



Alicia (WanQi) Geng, M.Ed. (she/her)

Co-Editor-in-Chief

Alicia Geng (she/her) is a Co-Editor-in-Chief on the newsletter team. She is currently in a doctorate program in school psychology at UC Santa Barbara. Alicia's research focuses broadly on school-based mental health, Asian American adolescents, and positive school climates. Additionally, Alicia hopes to find ways to bridge her interests in mental health and yoga to better support the positive development and well-being of diverse youth. In her free time, Alicia enjoys connecting with friends, reading, being active, and being immersed in nature!



Sue H. Kim, PhD (she/her)

Columnist/Reporter

Sue (she/her) is a licensed psychologist in solo private practice. She moved to the Twin Cities in 2023 after living in rural New Hampshire for 22 years, and she is now seeing her NH clients with a 100% telehealth practice. Sue's dad is from Korea and came to the U.S. for college when he was 17, and her mom is White (born and raised in Mount Joy, PA). She is active with the NH Psychological Association and has been a columnist for the AAPA newsletter since 2022. She is learning to give herself permission to rest and read for fun.



Darcy Ing, PsyD (she/her)

Copy Editor

Darcy Ing is a licensed clinical psychologist who works with a multicultural population at Waimanalo Health Center, a federally qualified health clinic based on Native Hawaiian values. She also works for Samaritan Counseling Center Hawaii, where she specializes in pastoral counseling and psychological assessments for clergy. Darcy has presented on various mental health topics for congregations and Christian and Buddhist clergy. She has a strong interest in multicultural issues and the psychology of religion and spirituality.



Lydia Lui, JD, MA (she/they)

Copy Editor

Lydia has served as a copy editor for the AAPA Newsletter since 2022. She recently received her Master's degree in clinical mental health counseling from the University of Minnesota in December 2023. Lydia has also initiated her own coaching practice, Wise Jade Coaching, and is a licensed attorney and professional violinist. Her memorable life experiences include performing with Yo-Yo Ma, Seiji Ozawa, and The Who. During her leisure time, Lydia enjoys traveling, photography, and following women's sports.



Linda Zheng, MA (she/her)

Copy Editor

Linda is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor at Collaboration for Psychological Wellness in Eagan, Minnesota. She utilizes trauma-informed somatic approaches such as Brainspotting and Sensorimotor Psychotherapy to support individuals, and often works with childhood, interpersonal, and generational traumas. She enjoys playing tennis, creating art, cooking, baking, reading, hiking, and spending time outdoors.



Sasha Mieko Vasilou, MA (she/they)

Layout Editor

Alexandra Vasilou is currently supporting the newsletter as a layout editor and was a co-editors-in-chief for the newsletter from 2024 to 2026. Her Japanese name is Mieko Fujisawa 藤澤美恵子, but her friends call her Sasha! Sasha is of Japanese (yonsei), Greek, and Irish descent. She is the granddaughter of citizens who were incarcerated in US "internment" camps during WWII. Participating in the AAPA community while pursuing her Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Northwestern University was an honor, and Sasha is excited to transition to actively contributing as a budding professional. Her clinical interests include historical trauma, civil courage, and counterculture as avenues for healing. Sasha admires the revolutionary work of the queercore punk scene, given the importance of music as a crucial tool for maintaining her own personal well-being.



Samantha Greco, MS (she/they)

Layout Editor

Sam Greco is a new layout editor on the newsletter team. She graduated with her bachelor's in psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is currently a clinical psychology Ph.D. student at Suffolk University in Boston. Sam's research interests include historical trauma and survivance among Vietnamese Americans. Clinically, they are interested in anxiety disorders and serving diverse populations including LGBTQ+ individuals and 2nd- and later-generation immigrant young adults. In her free time, Sam likes to do crafts, try new coffee shops, hike, and spend time with her cat.



AAPA FINANCE OFFICERS' REPORT

AAPA's Co-Finance Officers (FOs), Soyeong Kim and Flora Surjadi, are pleased to share the financial status of our organization. As of July 15, 2025, our total combined balance across Chase and PayPal stands at \$748,727.06. After accounting for fiscal agent accounts and AAPA Division balances, the main account holds a working capital of \$576,710.80.

We are happy to share the following updates with AAPA membership:

- **Welcoming Sruthi Swami!** We are thrilled to introduce Sruthi as the newest member of our Finance Officer team. Soyeong and Flora are looking forward to working with Sruthi through the onboarding process. Following this, Flora will be transitioning out, as she completes her FO term this summer.
- **2025 Budget Approved.** The Executive Committee has officially voted and approved the budget for 2025.
- **Disbursement of Dues.** We have disbursed the division dues for 2025. Division Chairs and Finance Officers should find this reflected in their respective division ledgers.
- **Taxes.** AAPA's 2024 taxes were submitted on time!
- **Investment Update.** A portion of AAPA's funds has been invested in a Chase Certificate of Deposit (CD) account, resulting in earnings of \$14,044.25 since 2024.



Spring 2026 Membership Report

Hello AAPA members!

As we begin a new year, we would like to welcome and introduce our new Membership Co-Chair, Jessica Benson. She will be working with Lisa Liu, who will remain on the Membership Team through 2026. We would also like to thank our outgoing Membership Co-Chair, Tania Chowdhury, for her service to AAPA.

As of November 30, 2025, AAPA has 1,602 members. Student members continue to comprise the majority of our membership. See the table at the bottom of the page for a breakdown of our members by membership category. If you have any questions or concerns regarding AAPA membership, please do not hesitate to contact membership@aapaonline.org.

Membership Reminders:

- As an AAPA member, you can edit your membership account by logging into your account on aapaonline.org. If you cannot remember your password, there is an option to reset it. Once you are logged in, you can update your account information such as your email address, mailing address, payment information, etc.
- Your AAPA membership lasts for a year from the date you signed up and will automatically be renewed after the year is complete. If you wish to cancel your membership, you may log into your account prior to the renewal date to do so.
- At the time of renewal, please remember to update your membership category if you have transitioned from student to professional (or professional to retiree/emeritus).
- If you wish to change your division memberships, please contact us at membership@aapaonline.org so that we may assist you in this process.

Thank you for your continued support of AAPA! Wishing you a peaceful and prosperous new year!

Best wishes,

AAPA Membership Team

Membership	# of Current
Student	914
Professional	676
Retiree/Emeritus	12
Total	1,602

OUTGOING AAPA OFFICERS



Tania Chowdhury, Ph.D.

“My experience has been one that has been edifying and inspiring. I am grateful to have worked alongside such thoughtful and dedicated colleagues. I thank you all for your efforts to foster a sense of belonging, unity, connectedness, and solidarity for all of us at AAPA.”

Chair, Council of Division Representatives 2023
Membership Officer 2024-2025

“It was a pleasure to serve the AAPA community alongside the executive board for the past two years as a Communications Co-Chair.”

Communications Officer 2024-2025



Lisa Cruz, Ph.D.



Minsun Lee, Ph.D.

Board Member, 2024-2025

“

“I’m grateful to have connected with truly wonderful people.”

”

“

This is my professional family that has helped me grow in so many ways. AAPA has been such a wonderful source of support through many unprecedented times and I’m excited to see what comes next.

Communications Officer 2020-2023
Board Member 2023-2025



Lainie Posecion, Ph.D.

”

“

“It was a truly rewarding experience and a joy to collaborate with so many passionate and talented colleagues!”

”



Florensia Surjadi, Ph.D.

Finance Officer 2023-2025


DMAA Updates

Celebrating Fall Community Event

This fall, DMAA hosted a “Meet the DMAA EC” event that brought together old friends and new faces for an afternoon of connection and conversation. Our EC shared about their roles, what serving on the EC means to them, and gave everyone a peek behind the curtain of DMAA leadership.

We also shared updates on scholarships, upcoming fellowship developments, and what’s in store for future events. We were able to answer questions, share stories over identity and experience, and hear directly from our members about new ideas, especially for activities geared toward the clinicians in our community. Thanks to everyone who joined us! Stay tuned for our next community gathering.

AAPA Provider Directory

In an effort to continue advocating for DMAA voices and topics, DMAA EC successfully connected with our AAPA Division Council Representative to add “Multiracial” as an Area of Focus. Check it out here 

<https://directory.aapaonline.org/all-listings/#>

AAPA Convention 2025

DMAA EC had a wonderful time celebrating all of AAPA’s work and accomplishments and connecting with our DMAA membership at our meet and greet event during the AAPA convention in August.



AAPI History Museum

DMAA EC members, Madison and Abby, had the pleasure of visiting the recently opened AAPI History Museum in Providence, RI where AAPA President-Elect Dr. Donna Demanarig serves on the museum's advisory council.




Research Awards

The DMAA EC is thrilled to be able to fund research and projects that serve the multiracial and adopted Asian American community. Stay tuned for a call for applications for our 2026 DMAA Project Awards.

Publication Alert

Check-out DMAA Co-Chair Yuki Yamazaki's recent publication *Multiracial Asian Americans: Intersectional Perceptions of Microaggressions and the Model Minority Myth* in the Asian American Journal of Psychology.

For those interested in deeper insights, listen to Yuki discuss the article and its broader clinical implications on the newest episode of The Multicultural Psychologist podcast, hosted by Linda Fleming McGhee, J.D., & Psy.D.

 Listen to the full interview on [The Multicultural Psychologist](#) or on [Spotify](#).



Follow our socials to find out exact dates and award amounts!



Instagram: @aapa_dmaa



@aapa_dmaa



Facebook: Division on Multiracial and Adopted Asian Americans of the AAPA

DOISAP

newsletter announcement

The Division on International Students and Professionals (DoISAP) extends our heartfelt gratitude to the DoISAP Executive Committee, membership, and the broader AAPA community—your engagement, dedication, and support make our work possible. We are excited to share a few key highlights from 2025:

April 8, 2025

CPT/OPT Basics

for International Students

Are you an international student in the field of psychology in the US?

Do you have questions about CPT & OPT?



08 April 2025
Tuesday
7-8 PM ET/ 6-7 PM CT

Hosted by:

- APA Div17 International Section International Mentoring and Orientation Committee (IMOC)
- AAPA Division of International Students and Professionals (DoISAP)

Hanna Lee
Former International Student Advisor & Editor of Sevissavvy.com



Scan the code to RSVP
Please submit your questions by **April 1st**
(This webinar will be recorded, including both audio and video)

Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/830271876303>

OPT/CPT Webinar

In partnership with the International Mentoring and Orientation Committee (IMOC) of the International Section of APA Division 17, DoISAP hosted a webinar on the basics of OPT and CPT for international students. Led by Hanna Lee, a former international student advisor and editor of SEVIS SAVVY, the session drew approximately 30 participants and provided students with valuable guidance for navigating OPT and CPT considerations.

October 2025

Internship Support

DoISAP revived the Internship Directory Initiative to collect community-sourced information about internship sites that welcome international students. To explore the directory, please visit [DoISAP Internship Site Directory](#). If you know of additional sites that support or accept international trainees, we would greatly appreciate your contribution through this form:

<https://forms.gle/bRn5cdRpLHYxWauM9>

Between October 14 and 20, 2025, DoISAP hosted five support sessions to assist students navigating the internship application process. Each session featured past interns, psychology international students from various sites, who shared their experiences and advice. A total of 18 students participated across the sessions. More information about the event can be found here:

a. [Session information](#)

b. [Session notes](#)

Collaboration with the Division on Students (DoS)

DoISAP is incredibly grateful for our continued collaboration with DoS to support international students and professionals. Together, we launched two key initiatives:

May 29, 2025

“Beyond the F-1: Securing Your Immigration Future in a Shifting Legal Landscape” Webinar

Featuring Jonathan Shiao, a practicing immigration attorney, this webinar focused on immigration visa options and strategies for safeguarding one’s status amid a changing sociopolitical climate. The event drew approximately 70 attendees and received highly positive feedback for its timeliness and relevance.



DoISAP-DoS Travel Award

July 2025

DoISAP and DoS co-established a travel award to support international students presenting at the 2025 AAPA Convention, with five recipients each receiving \$250 toward their travel expenses.



Looking Ahead

DoISAP is energized by the progress and connections we’ve built this year as a young division. In 2026, we aim to deepen collaborations with other AAPA divisions, psychological organizations, and advocates committed to supporting international communities, offering programming that uplifts and empowers our members. We also hope to continue growing our membership and gathering input on the initiatives and supports that matter most to you. Toward the end of 2026, we’ll hold elections to welcome a new Executive Committee. If you’re passionate about leadership and advocacy, we would love for you to consider joining us. Your continued engagement makes this work possible, and we look forward to another year of growth, connection, and community.

Warm regards,

DoISAP Executive Committee 2025-2027



ENVISIONING RADICAL FUTURES



Within & Beyond Asian American Psychology

The Asian American Psychological Association proudly announces Richard “Rich” Chang and Regina Tahk as the incoming Convention Co-Chairs for the upcoming annual convention. This year’s theme, “Envisioning Radical Futures Within & Beyond Asian American Psychology,” calls on scholars, practitioners, and community members to imagine transformative pathways toward justice, healing, and liberation in Asian American communities. Drawing on their expertise in social and clinical psychology and commitment to social justice, Rich and Regina aim to cultivate a space where collective imagination and interdisciplinary dialogue guide the future of Asian American psychology. We welcome all submissions that broadly incorporate this year’s theme.

Rich (he/they; doctoral candidate, University of Nevada, Las Vegas)

“This year’s theme was born from struggle and desperation. As the current administration continues to harm marginalized and vulnerable communities, I am reminded of the strength in unity; that together we can overcome. In reflecting, I acknowledge and am rejuvenated by the youths’ passion for change. I hope this theme demonstrates and provides an opportunity for young scholars and practitioners to showcase their radical visions of the future.”

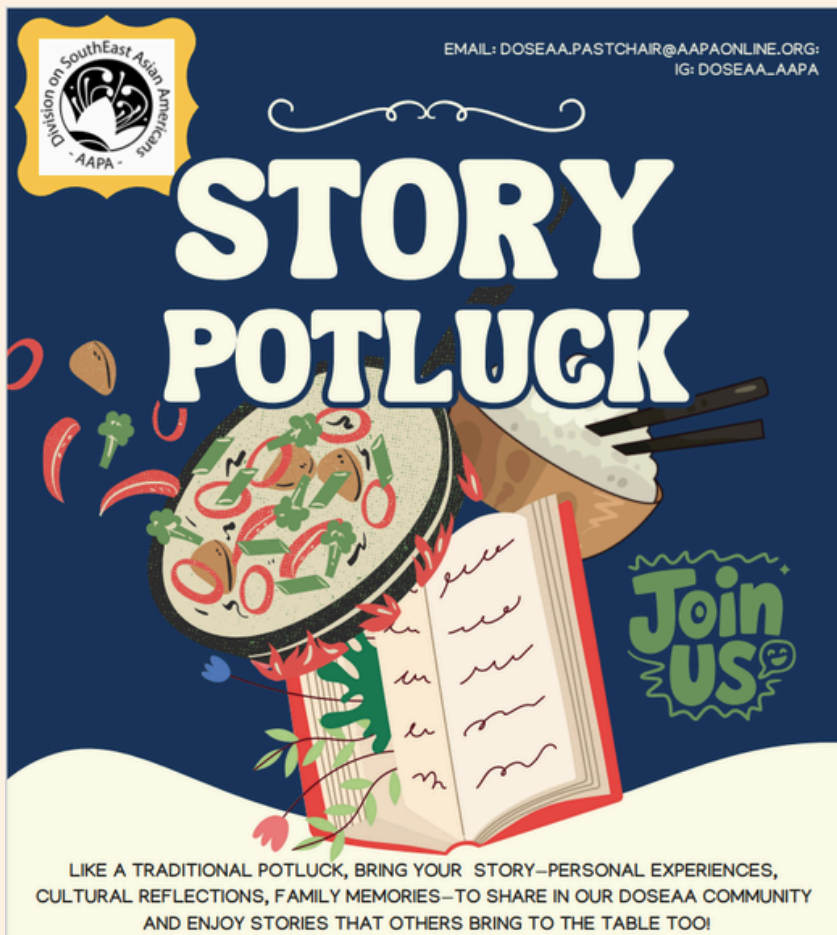
Regina (she/her; doctoral student, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque)

“Last year, we reflected on how resistance and community form the backbone of Asian American healing. This year’s theme grows organically from that foundation. If resistance gave us liberation, and community gave us joy, then envisioning radical futures becomes the natural next step of being able to not only survive, but imagining a future past the limitations imposed on us based on our identities and experiences.”

DoSEAA's First-Ever Story Potluck:

A Celebration of Voices and Connection

Written by: Thanh Nguyen, Khanh Pham, Thanh Phan, and Chi Pham



*Flyer created by Chi Pham, DoSEAA Student Representative

We're thrilled to share highlights from the inaugural DoSEAA's Story Potluck, a new initiative designed to bring together members of our diverse Southeast Asian American (SEAA) communities in a warm, informal space to connect, reflect, and learn through storytelling.

Just like a traditional potluck where everyone brings a dish to share, our "Story Potluck" invites participants to bring their narratives—personal experiences, cultural reflections, family memories, or community insights. Every voice, whether shared or heard, will make our communal table become more abundant and diverse.

The SEAA umbrella comprises a wide range of cultural backgrounds and lived experiences—from refugee journeys and immigrant stories to multigenerational legacies and diasporic identities. These narratives continue to enrich our collective Southeast Asian American identity, yet too often they remain unheard. This Story Potluck, as conceptualized by two DoSEAA student members (Khanh Pham and Cindy Pham) and two DoSEAA executive committee members (Thanh Nguyen and Thanh Phan), intends to break that silence. It serves as space for members of our SEAA professional community to celebrate one another, foster meaningful relationships, and in turn amplify the very cultural voices that have long protected, shaped, and empowered us.



Story Potluck Theme of the Day:

"Share a family saying, superstition, or form of parental scolding that used to annoy or confuse you growing up, but now, as an adult, you find yourself repeating or following."



On November 8, 2025, we hosted DoSEAA's very first Story Potluck event via Zoom. The gathering was casual and light-hearted. We kicked things off by getting to know each other. Our formal introductions quickly shifted to swapping K-drama and Netflix recommendations for those rare moments of free time! Then, comfort foods took center stage. Favorites like papaya salad with salted crabs (extra sour and spicy!), phở gà, bánh giò, canh chua, Hmong sausage, mochi, bún bò Huế, and bánh bèo sparked our smiles and cravings.



When the time came to talk about our potluck theme, attendees shared funny and heartwarming memories. There were the Vietnamese superstition of giving "beans" (or "đậu") for good luck before exams, the Hmong wedding traditions like the mej koob ritual and the rule of avoiding peppers in wedding dishes, and the inexplicable but overriding tendency to keep our heads warm or wear a jacket when we go outside. These exchanges revealed not only the uniqueness, but also the shared and often implicit or indirect intentions behind our cultural traditions—love, care, resilience, and hope for the future. The atmosphere of the Story Potluck event was intimate, filled with laughter and heartfelt moments. At the end, one attendee reflected: "Wow, one hour really flew by!"



Indeed, 'time flies when you're having fun' and all of us were fully present as we laughed, learned, and shared pieces of ourselves that rarely surface in other professional spaces. Our fun time was a gentle reminder that when we come together as a community, we create room for connection and belonging. As DoSEAA strives to be a welcoming "professional home" for members, we look forward to hosting more Story Potlucks and continuing to cultivate an environment of joy, connection, and belonging for our members.



If you are interested in joining DoSEAA's Story Potluck planning committee or to learn more about our upcoming events, please feel free to contact:
doseaa.pastchair@aapaonline.org

CAPTURING THE STORIES BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE



AAPA's DOW DIGITAL HERSTORY PROJECT IS BECOMING A DOCUSERIES

by Sue H. Kim PhD

As my 88-year-old father's brain keeps getting invaded with Alzheimer's Disease, I am realizing that he can no longer tell the stories of his childhood or his career. If my mother had not taken the time to write down his stories, they would be lost.

Not that institutions can get Alzheimer's Disease, but important stories of our organization's history will also fade without faithful and diligent efforts to write them down. Even better, Dr. Michi Fu and their HerStory Lab team (catalyzed by the first research assistant, Bianca Broomfield) have been working tirelessly since 2019 to record interviews with all our past AAPA female presidents and Division on Women (DoW) pioneers that have been affectionately referred to by Dr. Sherry Wang (DoW Chair &

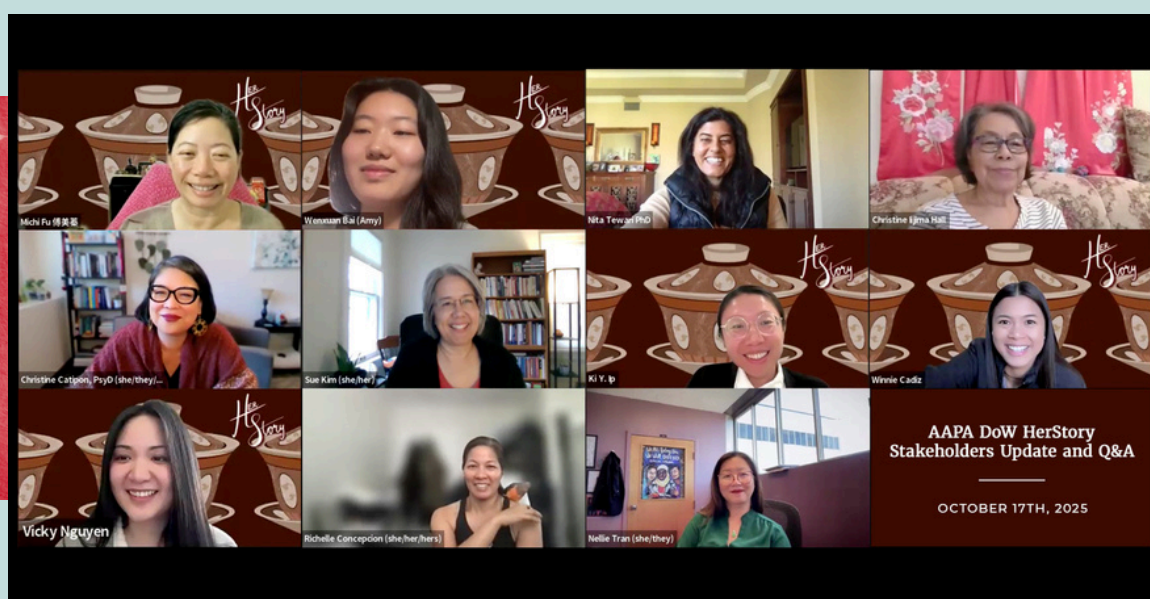
HerStory Co-Producer) as "Fierce Feminist Warriors."

And now, the international filmmaker Joyce F. Liu (formerly a graduate student of psychology) has agreed to create and produce a docuseries of the HerStory interviews (a suggestion of Dr. Cynthia de las Fuentes' when the first clips of interviews were shared at APA Division 45's Research Conference)!

History of the Project

Back in 2019, Dr. Fu was attending the AAPA convention in San Diego. Looking around at some of the faces at the convention, and noticing many who were missing, Michi realized, "Where the h*** are all our elders? We'll lose our institutional history" [if we don't capture it soon].

Dr. Nita Tewari brainstormed with Dr. Fu to originate the HerStory project and found support during a dinner with Regional Southern California Elders who were ready to offer their leftover conference funds (from a series of AAPA regional conferences dating back to the early aughts) as seed funding for the first series of interviews with the first four female Presidents of AAPA. Since then, the Division on Women has generously continued to support the project by providing funding to interview the rest of the female Past Presidents of AAPA, along with DoW leadership and allies. Likewise, Dr. Alice F. Chang left a generous endowment in the form of a Trust which has been earmarked for the HerStory docuseries. Clearly, we are indebted to the AAPA DoW's leadership making this entire project possible.



from the October 17, 2025 Stakeholder meeting on Zoom

Current Update

Since 2019, Dr. Fu and their HerStory Lab team have recorded 23 videotaped interviews of AAPA female past presidents and psychology pioneers, ranging from Dr. Christine Iijima Hall (their first interviewee) to Dr. Deb Kawahara (2025 APA President and first Asian American female APA President). The HerStory Lab team includes Winnie Cadiz (4th year PsyD student and Co-Lab Manager), Ki Yan Ip (2nd year MFT student and Co-Lab Manager), Wenxuan “Amy” Bai (recent Cal Poly Pomona graduate and Transcriber), and Vicky Nguyen (2nd year PsyD student and Transcriber). Winnie created the beautiful teacup logo, which is especially meaningful since Dr. Fu always shares a hot cup of tea with interviewees during their fireside chats.



“We’ve presented sneak peeks of the project interviews in the form of video trailers at four conventions already,” said Winnie, referring to meetings of APA Division 45, National Multicultural Conference and Summit 2024 Santa Fe, Alliant Multicultural Community-Clinical Psychology Los Angeles, and AAPA 2025 in Denver. Co-Lab Manager, Ki Yan Ip, has been designing the AAPA DoW HerStory online archive with dedicated sections for Presidents, Allies, Products, and Events. Once launched, the site will feature video interviews conducted by Dr. Fu, along with exclusive photos and the life and career stories of the interviewees.

Reflecting on her own HerStory interview, Dr. Christine Catipon, current AAPA President, wondered at the time, “why are you getting me at my most stressed?” Seeing the video trailer at AAPA in August “increased [her] sense of camaraderie with the HerStory community.”

“it has been a profoundly life changing experience to do this project...I walked away from every encounter...moved by how [the interviewees] embraced experiences with grace, humility, [and] sometimes with anger.”

-Dr. Michi Fu

Another past AAPA president, Dr. Richelle Concepcion shared that her HerStory interview occurred “shortly after my stroke [when] I was still navigating a new normal...it is sentimental for me [in watching the replay of my interview] to see me from a couple years ago, recognizing I’ve come so far.”

Dr. Nellie Tran, a previous AAPA president, recalled that “the best part [of her HerStory interview] was getting to spend time with Michi.” She proposed that “we need a book

on Michi...what it’s like to be in the room [doing all these interviews].” Fortunately, Dr. Nita Tewari promised that she would make sure that Michi would be interviewed as well.

Dr. Fu shared that, “it has been a profoundly life changing experience to do this project...I walked away from every encounter...moved by how [the interviewees] embraced experiences with grace, humility, [and] sometimes with anger.”

Next Steps

The HerStory team is currently collecting personal photos and home videos of all the HerStory interviewees so that the documentarian Joyce F. Liu and her team have more visual assets to work with since “nobody wants to watch two talking heads the whole time.” In addition, Dr. Jan Estrellado was able to connect Dr. Fu’s team with the UC Libraries, and Dr. Cheryl Tien (Former Lab Manager) accompanied Dr. Fu on a trip to the archives where they were able to hold and examine original paper versions of early AAPA newsletters. Those documents contain precious organizational information and feature some of our leaders who have since passed.

Regarding the documentary, the ten themes emerging from the interviews, and that the docuseries will highlight, include: introductions to all past AAPA female presidents and pioneers, the importance of mentorship, setting boundaries (e.g., saying “no,” practicing self-care, and accepting help), leadership styles, the future of psychology, finding psychology as your path, authenticity being key, the experience of being a woman of color in psychology, the importance of having a Division on Women, and

cultural challenges of being an Asian American (and/or immigrant) pursuing this field.

It takes a very special person to recognize what needs to be done to keep our stories alive. I am so grateful to my mother for collecting and recording my dad’s stories while he could still tell them. And we are ALL indebted to the work of Dr. Michi Fu, their incredible HerStory team, and their colleagues for capturing the powerful, fascinating, and honest stories of our AAPA female leaders and pioneers, by videotaping their intimate interviews over soothing cups of hot tea.



The HerStory Team is forever grateful to the AAPA Southern California Elders for their seed funding, Division on Women leadership (namely Drs. Sherry Wang and Lou Felipe for their invaluable support), and Dr. Alice F. Chang for her generosity and visionary leadership. Stay tuned for more...

Breaking the Silence:

The Mental Health Impact of Dowry, Honor, and Abuse in South Asian-Heritage

by Dr. Sheetal Siledar-Lee



In many South Asian-heritage communities in the United States (U.S.), traditions such as dowry demands, rigid honor systems, and interpersonal abuse continue to inflict emotional harm—often hidden by cultural, social, or family expectations. Recent U.S.-based studies highlight the pervasiveness and seriousness of the issue. For example, one survey of 155 South Asian women in the U.S. found that 31% experienced some form of domestic violence (physical, emotional, financial or sexual), and among those, 88% reported emotional abuse (Chowdhury & Sarkar, 2022). The abused participants described sleeplessness, panic attacks, loneliness, and hopelessness. Another U.S. study of South Asian immigrant women described how abusive marriages tied to migration and patriarchal expectations left women with little agency (Patel et al., 2019). These diaspora-based examples help ground what might otherwise feel abstract: they show that dowry demands, honor-based control, and abuse are not confined to South Asia, but manifest in U.S. settings with unique stressors (immigration, dual cultural expectations, isolation). Recognizing this is essential if community membership—whether as professionals, peer supporters, or advocates—wants to engage effectively in support, prevention, and advocacy.

Cultural Expectations, Silence & Trauma

The dowry system (or substantial bride-gift expectations) traditionally involves the bride's family providing money, property or valuables at the time of marriage. While sometimes framed as tradition or goodwill, trouble arises when the groom's family or in-laws make demands, link the gift to future control, or threaten retaliation if unmet. In the U.S. context, this can mean an immigrant bride brought in by her husband's family, feeling indebted or trapped under cultural/family expectations. One case report described a migrant woman whose repeated dowry-linked demands and emotional trauma resulted in complex post-traumatic stress disorder (Kaur & Singh, 2020).

Honor-based control adds another dimension: when family reputation, “what-will-people-say,” or preserving community status shape what a woman can do (edu-

cation, friendships, dress, partner choice). In the U.S., South Asian women reported being abandoned by husbands who returned them overseas because they were seen as failing to uphold “honor” or as burdens (Johnson & Ahmed, 2021). Interpersonal abuse—emotional, financial, physical—then becomes the mechanism through which these expectations are enforced. A survey found that among South Asians in the U.S., 48% reported physical violence, 38% emotional abuse, 35% economic abuse and 19% in-law abuse (South Asian Women's Alliance, 2023). The emotional toll is high: anxiety, depression, shame, loss of identity, or fear of speaking out. When these layers combine—dowry-linked pressure, honor expectations, abuse mechanisms, migration vulnerabilities—the mental health impact can be profound. Victims often feel isolated, unable to seek help (for fear of “shaming” the family), and may carry long-term trauma.

Why This Matters for Community Care

For organizations and membership networks oriented toward well-being, inclusion and equity, this topic matters in very practical ways:

- **Recognition of hidden trauma:** Many women (and men) may not label their experience “dowry abuse” or “honor control”—they may speak of “pressure”, “family expectations”, or “we do things this way”. Awareness helps identify people suffering silently.



- **Cultural context matters:** In diaspora settings, the interplay of migration stress, family networks, dual cultural expectations, economic pressures, gender roles and isolation means standard domestic violence models may miss key elements. For example, immigration status, visa dependency, in-law residence, dowry expectations, and fear of community stigma can increase risk and complicate support.



- **Prevention and advocacy potential:** By raising awareness, altering community norms, supporting culturally competent services, and promoting open dialogue, membership can help shift from silence and shame to safe conversation, connection and systemic change.



- **Support that affirms identity and dignity:** Culture itself is not the problem—the harm lies in coercion, inequality, shame and abuse. Responses should help individuals maintain cultural identity while reclaiming agency and safety.

Culturally Sensitive Support & Response Strategies

Whether you are a therapist, community worker, peer-supporter, or simply someone wanting to help, here are practical, culturally aware strategies:

- **Create space for narrative and context:** Ask open, non-judgmental questions such as: “What expectations did you feel around marriage or the gift/exchange?” “How are decisions made in your family about your role, money, status?” Be sensitive to cultural and migration context (e.g., visa status, in-law co-residence).
- **Recognize indirect presentations:** Many South Asian-heritage clients may present with somatic symptoms (headaches, sleep problems, gastrointestinal issues) or anxiety/depression without naming the cause. Research shows dowry-linked aggression correlates with somatic distortion and depressive symptoms (Rahman et al., 2018).
- **Validate and de-shame:** Let the person know the distress is real and the pressure they face arises from systemic expectations—not their personal failure.
- **Psychoeducation adapted to culture:** Use language that resonates (“family pressure”, “gift expectations”, “honor and respect”) rather than only clinical labels. Connect how expectations around dowry or honor can impact emotional and mental well-being.
- **Safety, advocacy and resource linkage:** If someone reports abuse (emotional, financial, physical, immigration-related), safety planning is essential. Consider immigration or cultural vulnerabilities (dependency on spouse’s visa, language barrier, multigenerational household). Link to appropriate culturally specific services.
- **Empowerment and voice:** Support the individual to explore agency: “What do you want? What support would help you? What small step could you take?” Encourage connection with peer/support groups or culturally familiar community resources that are safe.
- **If you aren’t a specialist but want to support:** Educate yourself about South Asian diaspora family expectations, migration issues, honor/shame norms. Be a safe listener. Share resources. Encourage open dialogue. Help reduce isolation.



Advocacy, Education & Takeaways

Key take-aways:

- Dowry demands, honor-based control, and related abuses are not simply “traditional cultural practices” but coercive systems of power that impact mental health in serious ways.
- In U.S. South Asian-heritage communities, these dynamics are present and often under-recognized—data point to significant prevalence of abuse and mental health symptoms.
- Culture can and should serve to protect people, not control them. Response requires both cultural humility and an anti-abuse lens.
- Awareness, open conversation, culturally competent support, and systemic advocacy form the path to transformation.

Ways to continue advocacy and education:

- **Partner with culturally specific U.S. organizations:** For example, organizations like Sakhi for South Asian Women (NY) and Narika – An Organization for survivors of domestic violence (CA) provide culturally

responsive support for survivors of abuse in South Asian communities.

- **Provide training and host dialogues:** Bring mental health professionals, community and faith-leaders, survivors together to explore dowry/honor abuse and mental health intersections in U.S. contexts.
- **Promote research and data-sharing:** Encourage participation in local studies, track prevalence, identify risk and protective factors in U.S. diaspora communities.
- **Advocate for culturally informed policy and services:** Recognize that some forms of dowry-linked coercion may be under-recognized in law or community services. Encourage mental health and domestic violence services trained in South Asian migration, honor/shame dynamics, in-law/immigration vulnerabilities.
- **Encourage community norm-change:** Foster education and awareness among youth, parents, elders about how traditions can evolve such that culture uplifts rather than controls. Support stories of families choosing equity, ending dowry demands, promoting consent and mental health literacy.

Conclusion

Understanding the mental health impact of dowry demands, honor-based control and interpersonal abuse in South Asian-heritage communities in the U.S. is essential. As members of our community and as practitioners, we have the opportunity and responsibility to shift narratives, support healing, reduce isolation, and transform harmful norms into inclusive, respectful practices. When we break the silence, we create space for dignity, voice, wellness and cultural pride—not at the cost of mental health, but in harmony with it.





MEMBERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

*Gabrielle
Balek*
(she/her)

Membership Level

Student

Affiliation

New Mexico State University,
Counseling Psychology Doctoral
Program

What is your cultural background and identities?

I identify as multiracial; I am Asian and White or, more specifically, Vietnamese, Chinese-Cambodian, Polish, and Slovak. I am a second-generation American born and raised in the Chicagoland area. I am also a queer/bisexual cis woman, and the proud mom of an orange cat named Alfie!

What do you cherish from your cultures?

With my mom, I have experienced the joy (and grief) of working to reconnect with what my family has lost through war and forced displacement. For that, I cherish the resilience in my lineage. I especially cherish the ways that I have learned to honor the dead and celebrate life; this brings to mind the smell of fresh flower petals in water, the earthy aroma of incense, and the citrus offerings atop altars. With that, I cherish our commitment to care for one another, and the acquired wisdom that our collective well-being and liberation are tied between and within each other.

How did you come to find and become involved with AAPA?

I learned about AAPA through Kevin Yabes, a current AAPA member and alum of my counseling psychology doctoral program. He connected me to AAPA after I expressed the desire to become more connected to the Asian American psychology community, especially since our program has limited mentorship and clinical/research opportunities related to this area of work. I'm excited to be here, especially as I begin my dissertation on the healing experiences of Asian American women who are survivors of sexual violence. I also plan to become more involved by attending the AAPA 2026 conference!

Which Divisions are you a member of?

Division on Students

Division on Women

What are some of your hopes for the future?

As a third-year doctoral student, I am looking forward to applying for internship next year. During internship, I hope to gain experience practicing with QTBIPOC and domestic and/or sexual violence survivor populations. After graduation, I plan to pursue clinical work full-time and explore the ways in which I may be able to conduct community-based projects or research outside of academia.

Anything else you would like to add about your personal, professional self and experiences?

I hope this space can serve as a way to find and build community, within and outside of psychology work!

Links



@gabriellebalek



@gabriellerb

The Other Ones by LEE



About the Cover Artist

Linh-Yen Hoang

(she/her) • AAPI Community Member

I'm a Vietnamese-American graphic designer and artist based in Portland, Oregon. With over 8 years of experience in the advertising and marketing space, my breadth of work is exemplified through print, branding, out-of-home advertising, gallery programming, conceptual and visual storytelling. In my own time, I'm incredibly passionate about uplifting DEI spaces and community-first led initiatives both within and outside of the industry, as well as within larger organizations made by and for the BIPOC community.

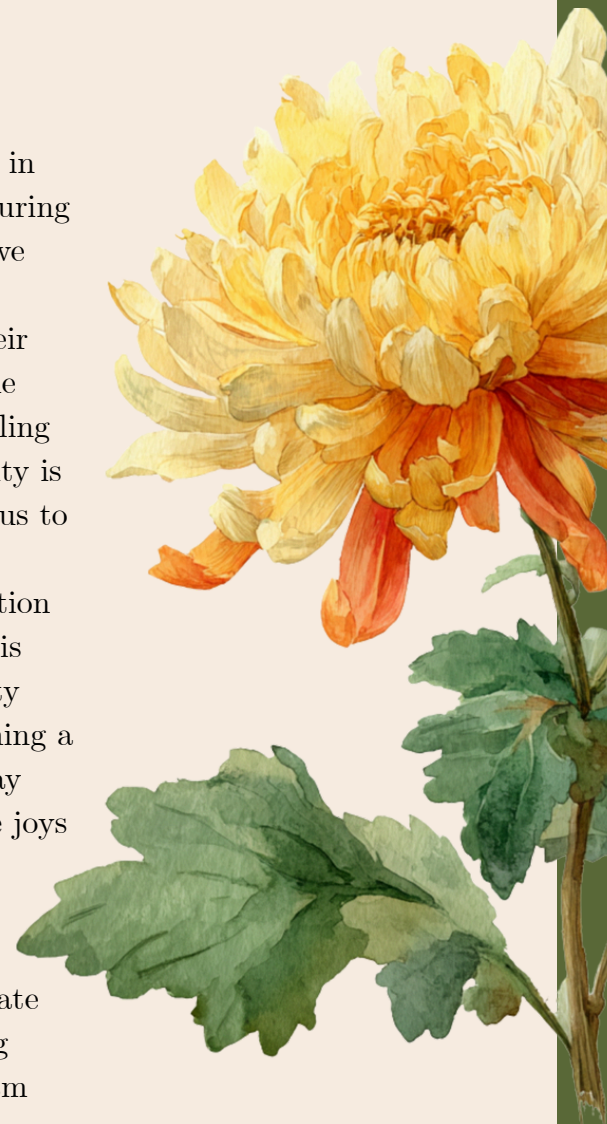
Description of "Reverence"

At the height of the pandemic, there was an alarming rise in hate crimes and xenophobia towards the Asian community. During that time, I was reminded of the deep respect we have when we think of our elders who are most impacted by these violent attacks. They're the most vulnerable and made to feel like their pain is not significant. But as most children of immigrants, the reverence we feel for our elders has made the work of dismantling anti-racism even more crucial during this time. This community is built to fight and despite what American history has painted us to become in their eyes, we no longer tolerate that rhetoric.

With Lunar New Year just passing (at the time of conception of this design), I wanted to honor the chrysanthemum, which is especially symbolic in the Asian community. It signifies vitality and prosperity for all who are gifted it in the New Year. Wishing a life of happiness and good health are at the core of how we pay honor to our families. During this time of trauma, we find the joys in our kinship.

100% of the proceeds from the "Reverence" print (in partnership with my good friend at [Issue Press](#)) went to Stop AAPI Hate, a national coalition addressing anti-Asian hate amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Their approach to dismantling anti-Asian racism starts at ending all forms of structural racism leveled at Black, Indigenous and other communities of color.

I chose to use graphic design as a process to honor my community, while also giving back to the ones who raised me. It was a moment for me to rally for my village, using the tools I knew best.





Palestinian Solidarity + Immigrant Support Resources



Psychologists for Justice in Palestine



The Institute for the Understanding of Anti-Palestinian Racism



Research on the Impact of Anti-Palestinian Racism



Research and Resources



Student Activism as Interpretation by Jyoti M. Rao



Palestine Legal



Palestinian Solidarity + Immigrant Support Resources



Defend and Recruit



ICEWatch



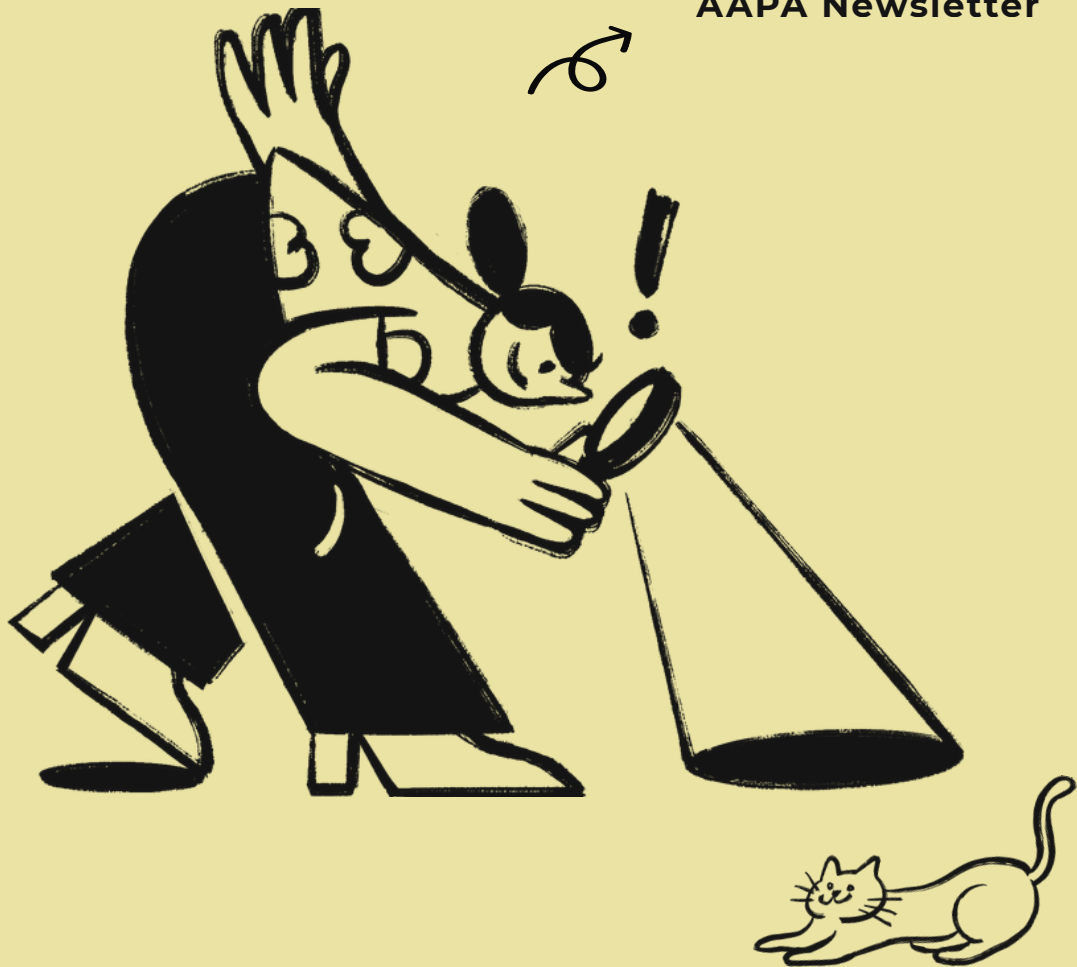
Immigrant Defense Projects



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AAPA Newsletter



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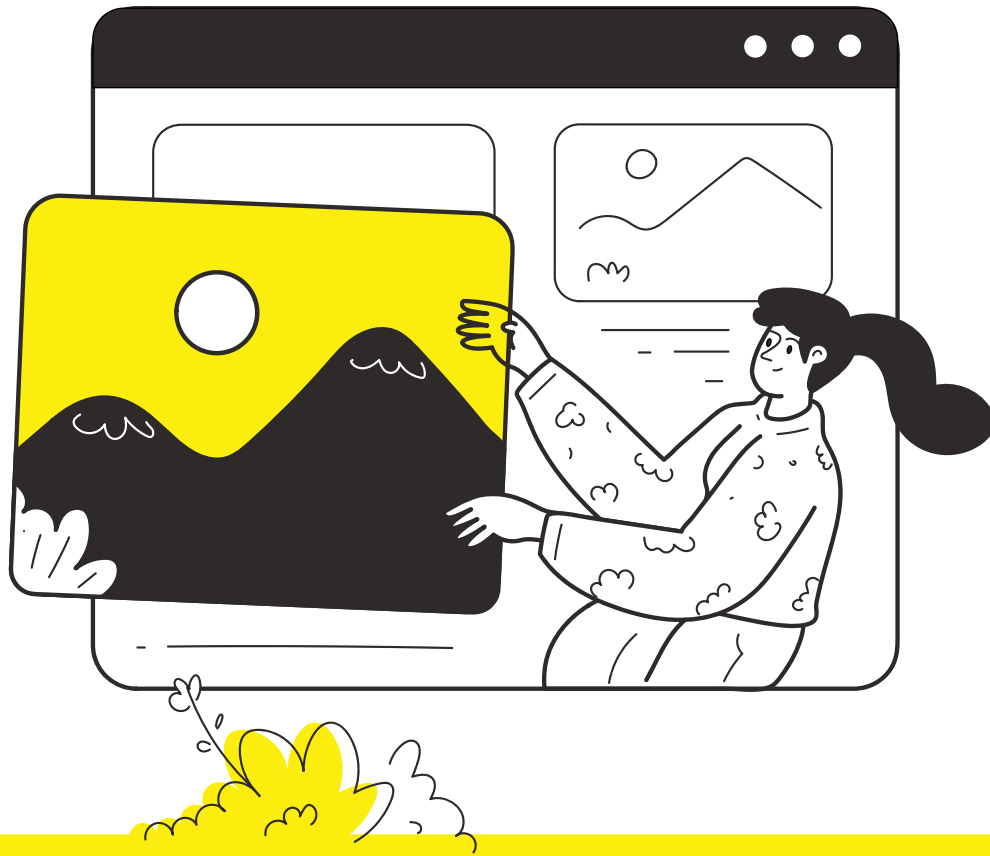
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