

YAC Statement on Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month (APAHM) celebrates the rich, powerful, yet often overlooked histories of the Asian American community. Formed during the crux of the Black Power movement of the late 1960s, the term Asian American was created as a coalition of identities to unify the Pan-Asian community politically at a time when US imperialism in Asia was at its historic peak. In our history, we have shown that principled unity, across our varied communities, is how we move toward justice for all.

In recent months, reports of hate crimes against Asian Americans have been mounting. These attacks are fueled by false and xenophobic lies that Asian Americans are foreign, dangerous, and the responsible culprits for the coronavirus. Especially during this APAHM, we would like to celebrate Asian Americans by highlighting our many contributions to the U.S. despite this onset of violence. We belong to an ancestry of resilience and strength, fighting against legacies of discrimination and hate.

The Asian American community has always been defined through strength, unity, and solidarity. In the 1860s, Chinese Americans fought rampant racism and discrimination as they toiled to create America's treasured railroad system. During World War II, Japanese Americans pushed their case against their internment all the way to the Supreme Court. After the murder of Vincent Chin, Asian Americans united to protest the unjust verdicts and violations of their civil rights. Each time, whether or not America took their side, the AAPI community stood together with others to make their voices heard. Asian Americans today face the same pattern of scapegoating and violence as did their ancestors at the start of American history, but they must reflect the same pattern of resilience and unity as well.

The Youth Advisory Council recognizes our current generation has inherited not only our ancestors' legacy of strength and advocacy, but also the persisting burden of colonialism and white supremacy. Through our work, we are intimately connected with our history, and know what is at stake if we not challenge discrimination in all its forms. YAC, therefore, strives to continue the fight for our rights and our lives by uplifting youth voices and building community solidarity. We must collectively stand together and take action by building our movement, educating ourselves and our community, and speaking out against all forms of racism, xenophobia and colonialism.

Signed,

The Youth Advisory Council of API Legal Outreach