

# 2023/04/03 APA Justice Monthly Meeting

APA Justice Meeting – Monday, 2023/04/03  
1:55 pm Eastern Time / 10:55 am Pacific Time

## Final Agenda

### 1. CAPAC updates

Speaker: Nisha Ramachandran, Executive Director, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, [nisha.ramachandran@mail.house.gov](mailto:nisha.ramachandran@mail.house.gov)

Nisha reported that the *Science* report on the NIH “China Initiative” is on CAPAC’s radar screen. There will be more discussions. CAPAC will look into tools available to a congressional caucus for additional information.

Across a number of different issues, CAPAC is working closely with the minority members of the Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party. They include CAPAC members and the Ranking Member of the committee who is also a CAPAC member.

Without knowing yet what the committee’s agenda is going to play out, CAPAC is flagging some of the issues – whether it is the introduction of a bill to reinstate the “China Initiative” or the types of concerning reports on what is happening at the NIH.

It is important to recognize the issues from many different sectors as pieces of the big picture. CAPAC wants to make sure that the treatment of our scientists and researchers – a lot of what we have talked about on the monthly calls – is also on the radar screen of the Committee.

A federal bill is being introduced at the federal level. It is similar to the Texas Senate Bill 147. CAPAC’s concerns about this bill are the same as the Texas bill. CAPAC put out a statement for all its leadership members across the board on these types of legislation at any level – federal, state, or local.

CAPAC has also been working on data equity. The comment period on OMB Directive MD-15’s “Initial Proposals for Updating OMB’s Race and Ethnicity Statistical Standards” will end in the coming week or two. Data equity and disaggregation is part of all the work CAPAC does.

Lastly, CAPAC will also be weighing in on the call for comments by the US Commission on Civil Rights on the federal government’s response to anti-Asian racism in the United States. The Commission’s investigation seeks to examine the federal government’s role in documenting, prosecuting, and preventing hate crimes against persons of Asian descent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 2. Remarks by New York State Senator John Liu

Speaker: John Liu 刘醇逸, Senator, New York State Senate

New York State Senator John Liu represents a broad area of northeast Queens. He is chairperson of the Senate's committee on New York City Education and also serves on the committees of Education, Finance, Higher Education, Judiciary, Rules and Transportation.

State Senator Liu spoke on two topics.

The issue of Asian American studies is very important to Senator Liu personally. It was catalyzed by the extreme anti-Asian hate that we have seen in the last few years against people in our community.

The root of racism and bigotry is ignorance and fear. And both of those reared their ugly heads during the COVID crisis. They were fermented by the former president.

The real way to address that hate is by educating people. It is not easy.

People scapegoat and blame Asian Americans for everything from global conflict to economic recession to pandemic. One of the reasons why we get blame for these things is because people do not know a whole lot about Asian Americans.

About a year and a half ago, a survey asked 2,000 Americans to name an Asian American. 58% couldn't even name one Asian American.

The most popular among the remaining 42% chose Jackie Chan, but he is an entertainer from Hong Kong. He is not an Asian American. The other response was Bruce Lee. Senator is a big fan of Bruce Lee, but he passed away 30 years ago.

It is always a lot easier to blame people about whom you do not have a clue.

So we need to have Asian American studies. Many states have passed Asian American studies requirement. We are still struggling with it here in New York State mainly because we actually do not have any curriculum requirements for any group.

African American legislators have been trying to get that requirement into our state laws. It has been a couple decades and they still have not been able to do that yet.

So, New York state is unlike some other states that have been able to add Asian American studies to be included in public schools. New York state is still struggling to get that enacted, but Senator Liu is going to keep pushing. It is not a question of if, but a question of when.

On the other topic, Senator Liu was asked to address the reinstatement of New York Police Department Officer Baimadajie Angwang.

Officer Angwang is yet another Chinese American of Tibetan ethnicity who has been picked out, scapegoated, prosecuted, and persecuted in a way no one should ever be,

especially when they dedicated their entire lives to serving the nation – in Angwang’s case, the New York city.

We all know about Dr. Wen Ho Lee and the particular ordeal he was put through.

We have seen so many other cases of Asian Americans, and in particular Chinese American professionals, accused of spying for our now newfound enemy/rival China.

Senator Liu did not know Officer Angwang personally, but he did see Angwang at work in the community quite a bit before he disappeared from the community. We later found out why.

What happened to Angwang is not about Angwang. It is about what could happen to any one of us.

### **3. Update from Asian American Scholar Forum**

Speaker: Kai Li, Vice President, Asian American Scholar Forum (AASF); Paul M. Wythes and Marcia R. Wythes Professor in Computer Science, Princeton University

Kai reported on the upcoming activities for the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May.

During the month of May, AASF will lift the invisible contributions of scholars and pioneers. Events and efforts will include a women leadership panel and a presidential appointment panel in partnership with the White House and the National Science Foundation.

You can find these activities at the [AASF website](#), which is part of a virtual museum. You can join the [AASF mailing list](#) to stay informed about the AASF activities.

Second, AASF has been working hard to call for due process and accountability from the federal government and universities. Our communities, especially those most impacted, must have a seat at the table. AASF has been meeting with officials within the federal government and the prominent research leadership across the country to represent the concerns and the interests of our communities.

Lastly, AASF continue to work with the scientists, academics, and scholars being impacted by federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and those who are harassed or interrogated at the border of entry. AASF has been collecting stories and defer to the scholars on whether they want to speak with media or policymakers or perhaps want to keep their stories anonymous.

Please contact AASF executive director, Gisela Kusakwa, if you have stories to share. Her email is [gpkusakawa@asforum.org](mailto:gpkusakawa@asforum.org).

## 4. Anti-Profiling, Civil Rights & National Security Program - Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Speaker: John Yang 杨重远, President and Executive Director, Advancing Justice | AAJC

- Advancing Justice | AAJC: [Anti-Profiling, Civil Rights & National Security Program](#)
- Legal Referral Service: Contact **202-935-6014** using the Signal app for attorney referrals. AAJC staff can assist you in Mandarin Chinese and English

John reported that AAJC has also been working, especially with the minority members of Congress, on identifying what issues are of concern for the House Select Committee for Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party, sending out the framework of how these discussions should look.

More generally when we are talking about US China relations, one of the things that AAJC is trying to make sure is how to talk about all of this with nuance, and even there, John is trying to order these discussions in a few different ways.

Within the Asian Americans groups, there are obviously conversations happening. One is within the civil rights community. Whether it is OCA or AASF and the like, they are having these conversations.

Within the Asian American business group, John believes that the Committee of 100 and ACE are somewhat part of that conversation.

And then there is the foreign relations aspect of all of this.

So what is interesting is trying to make sure we have all of these conversations in these different ways, segway them where appropriate.

And then you layer that onto the other place that we have been having a number of conversations with the mainstream civil rights community, the mainstream business community and the mainstream civil society community.

This is where it's sort of making sure that everyone stays on message as if we are a symphony. All of us will be playing different instruments as long as we are all playing this off the same sheet of music.

It is okay if we are playing different instruments, sometimes different people will have the melody, sometimes different people will have solos and the like as long as we stay coordinated on what we do.

And so certainly that's one aspect that we are trying to do is to help everyone stay coordinated.

Oftentimes in the background, obviously, take that solo or take the lead as needed.

But certainly if people have thoughts, John asks to reach out to him.

AAJC published a blog on TikTok recently. Because of the hearings related to the TikTok CEO and how AAJC thought that that really played into xenophobic fares, notwithstanding the fact that there are some real legitimate issues that should be asked.

John concurred with Senator Liu on Asian American studies. John asked everyone to do this in coordination with the African American, Hispanic American, Native American communities.

John sees some places where policymakers are trying to pull us apart, trying to offer Asian American studies at the expense of African American studies or AP programs in African American studies or the like.

We cannot be part of that. We need to stay united on this.

Similarly with LGBTQ rights, we have seen places where that has been sacrificed while people are trying to push Asian American studies.

We should not be part of that.

John encouraged participation in data disaggregation and OMB Directive 15 that Nisha mentioned.

The other piece is Julie Su's nomination to the Department of Labor. Her hearing is April 20. AAJC will be sending out an email to get people to show up to the hearing. John hopes to get her confirmed by Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Heritage month in May.

Right now there is no Asian American who is a cabinet secretary.

John said he testified before the US Commission on Civil Rights a couple of weeks ago. It is important for us to continue to have a strong showing in all these places where we can provide public comments, whether it is the hearing, OMB directive 15, or Julie Su's nomination.

## **5. Remarks by Dr. Robert Underwood**

Speaker: Robert Underwood, Member, President's Advisory Commission on AANHPI; Former President, University of Guam; Former Chair, CAPAC; Co-Chair of the United States Institute of Peace China-Freely Associated States Senior Study Group

- 2023/03/10 APA Justice Comments to President's Advisory Commission on AANHPI: [Pursuing a More Perfect Union and an Equitable Society](#)

- U.S. Department of Housing and Human Services: [Commissioners, President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders](#)
- 2021/10/18 U.S. Department of Housing and Human Services: [Charter, President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders](#)

Dr. Robert A. Underwood is a former Member of Congress representing Guam for 10 years. He is also President Emeritus of the University of Guam and has the distinction of being the longest serving President of the university. He has served the nation as Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) and the founding Chair of the Asian Pacific Islander Scholarship Fund. As a scholar and activist, he has served his region and his people as a passionate advocate for the respect and maintenance of the Chamorro language and the empowerment of the peoples of Micronesia.

Robert joined the meeting from Guam at 4 am Chamorro Standard Time, which is the only time zone named after a people. It was based on legislation that Robert moved through about 25 years ago.

Robert started his remarks with the case of Dr. Wen Ho Lee and the Department of Energy when he was Chair of CAPAC.

On one occasion when he was giving a presentation at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Robert learned that about 30% of the physicists there were of Asian background. Robert suggested that instead of giving them a double look, we should thank them for disproportionately protecting the United States and the nuclear stockpile.

Robert serves as a commissioner on the President's Advisory Commission. It is different from the White House initiative, which is an apparatus going around the country currently talking about economic equity.

The advisory commission is the vehicle through which all of us can participate and make our input known to the advisory commission.

They have several subcommittees, including Immigration, Health Equity, Economic Equity, Asian Hate and Inclusion. One of the central subcommittees is data disaggregation in order to be able to express more fully the diversity of the entire AANHPI community and to provide a capacity to target certain activities.

OMB Directive 15 was an initiative started in 1997 that provides basic minimum requirements for the collection of ethnic and racial data primarily for the census, but also for all federal agencies. They are being revised literally as we speak. It is important to

get all the community organizations interested and make sure that the newer categories reflect the diversity and the changing nature of the country.

There is a data equity committee working on this and there is an equitable data advisory group within the Biden administration that is also taking a look at this topic.

The exact purpose of the advisory commission is equity, justice, and dealing with anti-Asian xenophobia.

We are experiencing many of these issues right now. You can see it in the conversation about TikTok. There may be good reasons to deal with that, but it is the nature of the conversation. It is the emotional content. That is driven by people looking again at each other and giving people double checks. The intelligence agencies are looking at people again over and over and over, giving them double, triple checks and that is xenophobia.

In Guam, Robert has seen the possibility of an 8 billion dollar investment in anti-missile defense systems, 19 missile batteries, which were not even thought of 2 or 3 years ago. It is advertised as deterrence to generate public support.

In reality, in order to generate public support for the massive investment in military spending and in rearranging the so-called defense architecture out here in the Pacific, you have to generate a kind of fear of China and a concern about China.

This has manifested itself in various ways of conversation locally. There are always subset issues that come up as a result because the exacerbated rhetoric has to be the basis for the justification.

Once you get the military defense complex, you think about 8 billion dollars, that is a lot of money for a small area like Guam (2020 population 154,000 according to the Census Bureau). You are talking about an anti-missile defense system and a massive investment by companies that are going to provide these systems.

So there are articles coming out. There is always conversation - the local military commanders talking about homeland security almost on a monthly basis.

We are told that there is a missile being tested in North Korea and don't panic.

But every time someone tells you every 2 or 3 weeks, don't panic, it has the effect of actually creating panic because why are we in this heightened environment?

All of those things in combination create a very unfavorable and disturbing set of circumstances, particularly for Asian scientists.

Robert has seen that personally in his previous efforts. He has seen that in his capacity as president of the University of Guam in hiring. Faculty members and some professors that Robert hired were from the People's Republic of China and some from Taiwan. He has seen that in the conversation. Robert was successful in hiring them and,

parenthetically, they are great faculty members, some are doing patents, they are doing different things that are enhancing the capacity of the university in Guam.

But the nature of the conversation for hiring them was a little disturbing because it reflects some of this xenophobia, which is being heightened at this time.

Robert urges all of us to feel free to communicate with him directly at [anacletus2010@gmail.com](mailto:anacletus2010@gmail.com) or the White House Advisory Commission at [aanhpicommission@hhs.gov](mailto:aanhpicommission@hhs.gov).

As a matter of equity, Robert points out that the Commissions for Hispanic Americans and African Americans have permanent staffs, but the Commission for AANHPI does not. It rotates staff every three months, and it is very difficult.

It can be resolved, but it shows that even within the context of people who ostensibly are very favorable and very understanding, there is hesitancy, time lag, and mental lag when it comes to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Robert also urges all of us to remain involved and pay attention. The Commission is meant to give advice to the President. It is a long process, but there will be another meeting in July in Hawaii and another meeting likely in September in Washington DC.

Pay attention to the federal register. Robert will also let Jeremy Wu and APA Justice know about the topics that are coming up.

The advisory commission actually goes out of business this year. It has to be revitalized, and a new executive order has to come out.

That is hopefully the time to get a more permanent standing for the future commission. Some of the commissioners will get renominated.

## **6. Organizations Need to Build National Alert Network**

Speaker: Paula Williams Madison, Former Print and TV Journalist, Retired NBCUniversal Executive and GE Company Officer, Former Vice President of the Los Angeles Police Commission and Owner of The Africa Channel

- 2022/02/13 Multicultural Media Correspondents Association: [Paula Madison Award Presentation](#) (27:30)
- 2020/10/17 Harper Books: [Finding Samuel Lowe by Paula Williams Madison](#) (2:16)

Paula William Madison was a newspaper reporter, then editor at the Fort Worth Star Telegram and the Dallas Times Herald. Later she joined ABC and became a TV news executive at WFAA TV8 in Dallas and moved to NBC to join KHOU-11 in Houston. In 1989, she returned to her hometown New York City and became an executive of NBCUniversal until her retirement.

In early March, Paula raised in the Coalition for a Better Los Angeles weekly Zoom meeting that the AAPI community could use a media watchdog group. It would be tasked with submitting content to news media and disseminating to the general community information, news stories, editorials, op-ed's and more regarding acts of discrimination, hatred, and other dangerous actions which target AAPI folks. Perhaps a conversation could be held with a number of national organizations that would form such a task force which would be useful and appropriate for the foreseeable future. Several organizations including UCA, CACA, Committee of 100, and Asian American Advancing Justice could form such an entity. That is the basic concept.

That was the background and basic concept for Paula's talk in the meeting. Paula started by saying that the concept may not be revolutionary, but it has perhaps not been proposed the way she was going to propose.

The idea was certainly prompted by Texas Senate Bill 147. Paula reached out to a number of friends and organizations and began to agitate. While this bill was introduced in Texas, the implications nationally and globally were huge.

Paula hopes that there will be some consideration given to forming in a more formalized fashion a task force or a monitoring group that goes across a variety of organizations.

When there are issues to deal with, a strike force would be ready composed of individuals from throughout our communities, who are well versed, well respected, credentialed, and have the ability to speak clearly and effectively about the particular matter.

At this time, when something happens, we respond and we react.

Paula proposes that we go on the offensive by employing strategies to reach editorial boards of major media such as New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and USA Today, have enough of a portfolio and credibility, and meet to talk about how a particular issue is being framed by them or not being addressed, such as Officer Angwang, scientists unfairly prosecuted, xenophobia, or the fear of China, as well as to suggest speakers to the editorial boards.

The public is now being frightened into considering anything that is from the East - anything that is Chinese or Chinese-like - to be scary and dangerous to the United States.

We should get on Sunday morning television shows, for example, to have well-spoken people to accurately represent our communities and talk about issues and confront them head on.

In the past two years, look at how much attention has been paid to anti-Asian hate. We have never seen this kind of coverage. Many of the news organizations are willing to hear our perspectives.

Consider the people of the Asian diaspora not as scary people. We are US citizens. For those who are not citizens or not born here, there is no agenda to tie us to a foreign nation to suggest that none of us can be trusted.

It is an approach tried and true by Paula. Take into account the strategies that have been used effectively by the African American and Hispanic American communities. There is already a playbook that could be adopted with many similar strategies without being in our own silos.

Paula became very concerned about media reports in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd in 2020. While the protests in the streets were Gen Z, millennial, and young people of all races, nationalities, multi-gendered.

Paula and Gay Yuen, Chair of the Friends of the Chinese American Museum of Los Angeles, reached out to two congresswomen – Judy Chu and Barbara Lee – about the optics that young people were marching arm-in-arm, but comments were sought by the media from the older generation and siloed by race.

The next week, the Asian American, African American, Hispanic Americans, and indigenous members of Congress held a joint press conference, stood up and said we are all in this together.

In Los Angeles, Paula gathered a diverse group and convened for at least 90 minutes weekly since March 2020. They have met with the police chief of Los Angeles and the new sheriff in Los Angeles via Zoom, as well as various civic leaders behind the scenes pushing for all to come together as a community.

One of the important messages is the “disrespect” towards the AAPI community. Incidents of slights for the AAPI community occur in ways that would never exist for the African or Hispanic communities.

Paula recognizes Confucianism does not make waves. Do not be too loud. Try to get along.

However, in our society, those values are not held high generally. Consequently, there is a stereotype about people of the AAPI community – they are model minorities who are quiet and do not make waves. They do not create concerns or issues.

Paula implores our group to consider those stereotypes, however incorrect they may be, are not serving us.

This is a time in a variety of ways in this society, such as the Academy Awards, when we are beginning to see some willingness to be more accepting. Maybe there has been discrimination. Maybe we are not being fair. So maybe that door is opening a little bit.

But again, when we take a look at xenophobia, that door slams shut right away.

Paula's proposal to this group is to come together and form a strike team - a task force that takes a look at not only media but also legislative actions that will push our communities into the realm of mysterious and fearful – we cannot be trusted because we are not really Americans.

A vibrant discussion followed. With permission from Nisha and Paula, video of their talks are now posted for public viewing at <https://bit.ly/40gzLHW> (1:00:08).