



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Asian American Commission



Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Asian American Commission

# **Annual Report | 2020**



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# A Message from the Executive Director & the Interim Executive Director

Dear Friends & Supporters,

2020 marks the Commonwealth of Massachusetts American Commission's (AAC) 14th year in the community. It was an unprecedented year with a global pandemic devastating many communities and changing our way of life. Despite the recent challenges related to COVID-19, the AAC was able to adapt and re-adjust in the way we work and serve Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities.

This report will highlight how the AAC has addressed and uplifted many pressing issues facing AAPI residents, including the recent surge in violence against the Asian community. This year, the AAC organized and delivered new programming, including Facebook live COVID-Talks, Civil Rights Conversations, Young Leaders Web Series, AAPI Heritage Month, Pride Film Festival, Filipino Heritage Month, Native American Heritage Month, the 2020 Election, and the 2020 Census. We also awarded \$10,000 in grants to AAPI organizations and small businesses.

Throughout the year, the AAC translated and distributed resources related to COVID-19, Anti-Asian Hate, and the 2020 Election. The AAC has developed a Community Action Guide to respond to incidents of anti-Asian racism and held conversations with the Attorney General's Civil Rights Division Office, the Boston Teachers Union, and social justice community organizations to raise awareness of racial violence. AAC has also created a reporting form to collect data on incidents throughout the Commonwealth.

In 2021, the AAC will continue supporting and advocating for policies that advance racial equity, host listening sessions to hear directly from community members, and create programming on civic engagement and advocacy. We also hope to expand our community partnerships and uplift community organizations who are on the ground doing vital work to support AAPI communities across MA.

It is an honor to work beside many brilliant Commissioners, community leaders, and elected officials who share the common purpose of building a more equitable and inclusive Commonwealth. We are incredibly grateful to the State Treasurer for housing the AAC over the years and working with us throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Thank you also to the staff for their leadership and hard work in implementing various programs and events. A special gratitude to Jenny Chiang, the AAC's former Executive Director for her three years of exemplary service to the AAC and the AAPI community in Massachusetts.

Sincerely,



Yasmin Padamsee Forbes  
Executive Director  
(April 2021 - Present)



Jessica 'Jay' Wong  
Interim Executive Director  
(December 2020 - March 2021)



# About the Commission

The Asian American Commission was established under Section 68 of Chapter 3 of the Massachusetts General Laws, which went into effect on October 29, 2006.

The AAC was formed in recognition of the General Court's findings that Asian Americans constitute the fastest growing minority population in both the Commonwealth and the United States, that they represent a diverse population within the Commonwealth, and that many members of the Asian American community have overcome great hardship and made outstanding contributions to the educational, economic, technological, and cultural well-being of the Commonwealth, but still face many challenges in their efforts for full social, economic, political integration within the Commonwealth.

**The AAC is a permanent body dedicated to advocacy on behalf of Asian Americans throughout Massachusetts.**

Our goal is to recognize and highlight the vital contributions of Asian Americans to the social, cultural, economic, and political life of the Commonwealth; to identify and address the needs and challenges facing residents of Asian ancestry; to promote the well-being of this dynamic & diverse community, thereby advancing the interests of all persons who call Massachusetts home.

## Commissioner Membership

Name	Appointing Authority	Term 1 (#Year)	Term 2 (#Year)	Term Ends
Pralhad KC	Governor	3	3	2021.08.31
Mary Chin	Governor	3	2	2022.08.31
Mary K. Y. Lee	Governor	3	1	2023.08.31
Meenakshi Bharath	Senate President	3		2021.12.31
Jonjy Ananth	Senate President	3	2	2022.12.31
Haniya Syeda	Senate President	2		2022.12.31
Vira Douangmany Cage	Treasurer	3	3	2021.12.31
Danielle Kim	Treasurer	2		2022.12.31
Ekta Saksena	Treasurer	1		2023.12.31
Dimple Rana	House Speaker	3	3	2021.12.31
Samuel Hyun	House Speaker	2		2022.12.31
Betty King	House Speaker	2		2022.12.31
Nina Liang	Attorney General	3	2	2022.12.31
Nate Bae Kupel	Attorney General	3		2021.12.31
Megha Prasad	Attorney General	1		2023.12.31
Bora Chiemruom	Auditor	3		2021.12.31
Philjay Solar	Auditor	2		2022.12.31
Cinda Danh	Auditor	1		2023.12.31
Wingkay Leung	Secretary of State		Holdover (until successor is appointed)	2018.09.19
Vacant	Secretary of State			
Vacant	Secretary of State			

# Commissioner Membership

The 21 Commissioners of the AAC consist of citizens of the Commonwealth who have demonstrated commitment to the Asian-American community and have been appointed by the following authorities: The Treasurer, The Governor, The Speaker of the House of Representatives, The President of the Senate, The State Secretary, The Attorney General, and The State Auditor. Each authority may appoint three Commissioners.



Samuel Hyun



Philjay Solar



Danielle Kim



Haniya Syeda



Jonjy Ananth



Meenakshi Bharath



Bora Chiemruom



Mary Chin



Cinda Danh



Vira Douangmany  
Cage



Pralhad KC



Betty King



Nate Bae Kupel



Mary K. Y. Lee



Wingkay Leung



Nina Liang



Megha Prasad



Dimple Rana



Ekta Saksena

## Team of Staff

The Executive Director is appointed by the Commissioners to coordinate and execute programming, advocacy, and outreach efforts on behalf of the AAC. With the exception of the Executive Director and supporting staff, the members of the Commission receive no compensation for their services, but serve as special state employees.



**Yasmin Padamsee  
Forbes**  
Executive Director



**Jessica Wong**  
Program Director



**Sheila Vo**  
Marketing Comm.  
Coordinator



**Kamalani Yuen**  
Western MA  
Coordinator



**Lily Tang**  
Research Policy Intern



**Sarah Lin**  
Legislative Intern

## Financials / Budget

Calendar Year: January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020

\*Note: Government funding reflects FY2021 (July 1, 2020 - June 20, 2021)

### Expenses

\*Personal & Operations: \$70,220

Programming: \$43,291

Contract Employees: \$8,192

Grants & Contributions: \$18,700

**Total:** \$140,403

### Revenue

\*Government: \$170,000

Grant & Contracts: \$36,718

**Total:** \$210,621



# FY2020 Programs and New Initiatives



As part of the FY2021 budget, the AAC was incredibly grateful to receive a state appropriation of \$170,000. This amount has been allocated toward funding salary and establishing three additional satellite office spaces. As the only State Agency that advocated for the Asian diaspora in MA, the increase in internal capacity has been critical in reaching new audiences and expanding programs.

The past year, 2020 was a historic moment for us as we expanded engagement with AAPI communities in Western Massachusetts. In Western Massachusetts, there is a growing Asian American community but a significant lack of culturally/linguistically appropriate resources. Organizational support, and staffing support will be crucial to helping establish a strong foundation and create links with Asian American communities in Western Massachusetts.

Due to COVID-19, the AAC canceled in-person events and transitioned programming to virtual platforms. We've continued hosting virtual events including the AAPI Heritage Month Celebration, Asian holiday celebrations, Pride Month Educational Programming, and advocacy related to racial justice. Below is a snapshot of many of our virtual and in person events from 2020 and we look forward to transit back to in-person events throughout the Commonwealth.

## Young Leadership Symposium

The AAC held the Annual Young Leadership Web Series on October 24, 2020, where we welcomed over 50 participants. Boston City Councilor Michelle Wu opened the event!

Commissioner Danielle Kim moderated an open discussion with Commissioners Vanna Howard, Meenakshi Bharath, and Sam Hyun who shared their stories and experiences running for office and working in the public service sector as an Asian American. Panelists highlighted getting civically involved is possible for all ages. Participants were able to engage in an interactive workshop with Dr. Liza Talusan to share and explore their journeys towards racial justice.

We were honored to celebrate emerging AAPI leaders across Massachusetts and award three youth scholarships this year. Our scholarships recognize AAPI college and high school students who have demonstrated solidarity with communities of color, a passion for giving back to AAPI communities, and a commitment to assisting those deeply affected by COVID-19.



### The Black Indigenous Person of Color Solidarity Scholarship

- Shubhecchha Dhaurali
- Alexandra Chin
- Ashley Ngo
- Anita Yip

### The COVID-19 Remote Learning Scholarship

- Joyce Yoon
- Stacy Chen
- Jaceline Fianza

### The May Thin Suey-Lew Lam and Chuck Hai Lam Family Scholarship

- Ashley Chang
- Sally Chu

**#COVIDTalks**  
PRESENTED BY AAC

Anti-Asian Violence & Islamophobia Through A South Asian Lens

TUNE IN ON FACEBOOK LIVE & ZOOM  
**MAY 27 | @5:30PM EST**

AAC presents  
**CIVIL RIGHTS CONVOS**

**HOW TO GET CIVICALLY INVOLVED**  
with Helena Berbano  
Mod. by Jay Wong

TUNE IN ON FACEBOOK LIVE & ZOOM  
**SEPT. 22<sup>ND</sup> | 6PM EST**

**SOUTHEAST ASIAN & BLACK LIBERATION**  
CIVIL RIGHTS CONVOS SERIES

Zen Mosa, Director of Youth Organizing at Freedom, Inc.  
M. Adams, Co-Executive Director of Freedom, Inc.  
Jay Wong, Moderator & Program Director of the AAC

TUNE IN ON FACEBOOK LIVE & ZOOM  
**OCT 1<sup>ST</sup> | 5:30PM EST**

**#COVIDTalks**  
PRESENTED BY AAC

Assistant AG: Shafaq Islam  
Moderator: Jenny Chiang

The Attorney General Civil Rights Division:  
Providing Resources & Support for the AAPI community

TUNE IN ON FACEBOOK LIVE & ZOOM  
**MAY 8 | @1PM EST**

Join the Asian American Commission for a

**Mental Health Interview with**  
Mabel Lam | Commissioner & Clinical Psychologist

Learn more about the effects on mental health within the Asian American Pacific Islander community due to COVID-19

**Mar 31, 2020 | 11AM**  
Tune in on Facebook Live

The Asian American Commission presents

An Interview with  
Moses Farrow & Mike Keo

Creators of the #IAMNOTAVIRUS campaign.  
Learn about their photography project and how you can participate!

**#IAMNOTAVIRUS** April 1, 2020 | 7PM  
Tune in on Facebook Live  
Facebook.com/aaccommission

## PROGRAMS, ADVOCACY & EDUCATION

### Civil Rights Conversations

Due to the pandemic canceling our annual AAPI Civil Rights Forum, the AAC continued to host vital conversations around civil rights issues that affect the AAPI community. In these talks, we addressed conversations about discrimination, xenophobia, racism, taking action, and getting involved in the community to create change.

- Anti-Asian Violence and Islamophobia with Commissioner Hanifa Syeda & other community leaders
- APIA and Civic Engagement with Helena Berbano
- Southeast Asian and Black Liberation with Freedom, Inc.

### #COVIDTalks

COVID-19 Talks provided online discussions about how to go about everyday life in the time of COVID-19. We were able to engage our audience in discussion about how to cope with feelings of uncertainty, stress, and anxiety; where to report hate crimes; and how to channel struggles into advocacy & art.

- Attorney General's Office Civil Rights Division: Providing Resources & Support for the AAPI Community w/ Assistant AG, Shafaq Islam
- Mental Health During Quarantine with Commissioner Mabel Lam
- #IAMNOTAVIRUS Campaign
- AAPI History: Debunking Stereotypes and Finding Our Voices

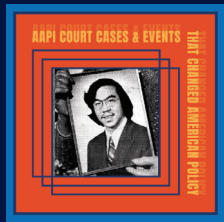
# Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month

The AAC celebrated #AAPIHM by dedicating each week of May to a specific issue relevant to the AAPI community. Each week was accompanied by compelling infographics and interactive webinars! Importantly, the AAC also held intentional space to highlight the unique experiences and histories of Pacific Islanders across Massachusetts.



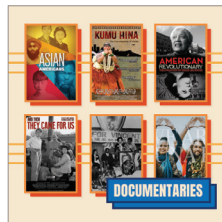
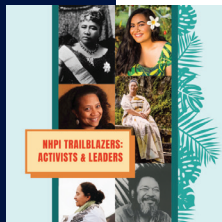
## Week 1: AAPI History

- Provided education on the importance of knowing Asian American history, ethnic studies, and being an ally to communities of color.



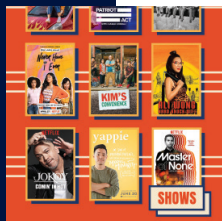
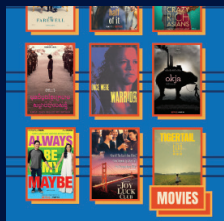
## Week 2: Pacific Islander Week

- Spotlighted the personal experiences and voices of Pacific Islanders in MA, highlighted Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander activists and leaders in the US, discussed how to be an ally with Pacific Islanders, explained the breakdown of Oceania, and provided education of the Hawaiian lei.



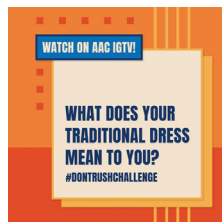
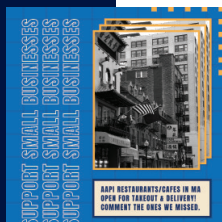
## Week 3: Representation Week

- Highlighted books, documentaries, movies, and shows depicted the Asian American & Pacific Islander experience. All resources were written, produced, directed by AAPI creators. We also held a paint night with an Asian American artist, Fiyabomb, and had a Q&A session about how her personal experience informed her art.



## Week 4: Cultural Appreciation Week

- Featured Asian American small business restaurants and cafes in Massachusetts in a master list and showcased traditional dresses of various Asian countries in a video presentation.



## Pride Film Festival

During June, the AAC hosted our very first Pride Film Festival! We screened documentaries and short films of Asian Americans in the LGBTQ+ community & held Q&A sessions with the creators of these films. We hosted conversations centering identity, intersectionality, and the creative process with the creators and our audience.



AAC X UMASS AMHERST ASIAN & ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES CERTIFICATE PRESENTS

**Unspoken**

**PRIDE MINI FILM SERIES**  
featuring LGBTQIA+ AAPI creatives

**KUMU HINA**

MONDAY May 4 10/9c

SWIPE FOR MORE INFO >



Searching for **QUEER ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICA**

**FRI. JUNE 26 @6:30PM EST**

- VISIBILITY AT PRIDE: THE PACIFIC ISLANDERS WHO MARCHED IN 1982 (7MINS)
- WE'RE ASIANS, GAY & PROUD: THE STORY BEHIND THE PHOTO (6MINS)
- UNSPOKEN

Directed by **PATRICK G. LEE**



**MON. JUNE 29 @6:30PM EST**

**FINDING THE FIERCE GAYSIAN WITHIN**  
w/ Q&A Discussion

Directed by **CANDACE NGUYEN**



**KUMU HINA**  
HAWAIIAN TEACHER & ICON

**TUES. JUNE 30 @6:30PM EST**

Directed by **DEAN HAMER & JOE WILSON**

- *Searching For Queer Asian Pacific America*  
by Patrick G. Lee
- *Finding the Fierce Gaysian Within*  
by Candace Nguyen
- *Kumu Hina*  
by Dean Hamer and Joe Wilson

**LIFE OUTSIDE OF THE PHILIPPINES**  
-INTERVIEW SERIES-

<b>Bill &amp; Fraze Solar</b> PAMANA	<b>Betty King</b> Asian American Commission	<b>Cristina Castro</b> Iskwelahang Pilipino
<b>OCTOBER 15<sup>th</sup></b> @6:30PM	<b>OCTOBER 16<sup>th</sup></b> @6:30PM	<b>OCTOBER 19<sup>th</sup></b> @6:30PM

**\*REGISTER FOR EACH ZOOM SESSION\*  
OR TUNE IN ON FACEBOOK LIVE!**

**Moderated by Commissioner, Philjay S. Solar**  
Philjay is a Filipino-American community builder working as an Investigator for the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office for Civil Rights. In his spare time, he helps strengthen his Filipino community and helps cultivate the next generation of young Asian American leaders.



In celebration of Filipino American History Month, AAC presents




**FILIPINX HISTORY: PAST & PRESENT**  
with Prof. Richard Chu  
Mod. by Philjay Solar

TUNE IN ON FACEBOOK LIVE & ZOOM  
**OCT. 22<sup>ND</sup> | 5:30PM EST**

**Filipinx Businesses & Organizations in Massachusetts**

SWIPE & SUPPORT >>

Let's talk about  
**MAUNA KEA**



**HOW TO BE AN ALLY TO THE NATIVE HAWAIIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITY**

SWIPE LEFT!

#youareindigenoland

**WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT NATIVE HAWAIIANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS**

#nativeamericanheritagemonth

## PROGRAMS, ADVOCACY & EDUCATION

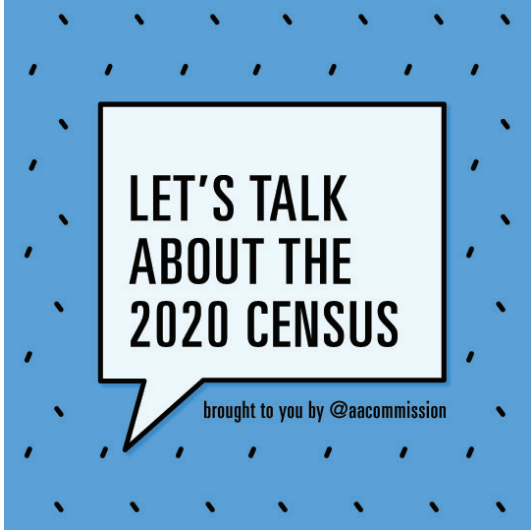
### Filipino American History Month

Another first in 2020 was celebrating Filipino American History Month in partnership with Commissioner Philjay Solar. The AAC highlighted the Filipino American experience and culture through oral history talks with three community members, held a webinar presentation of the past and present history Filipinx American community with Professor Richard Chu, and spotlighted Filipinx businesses and organizations in MA.

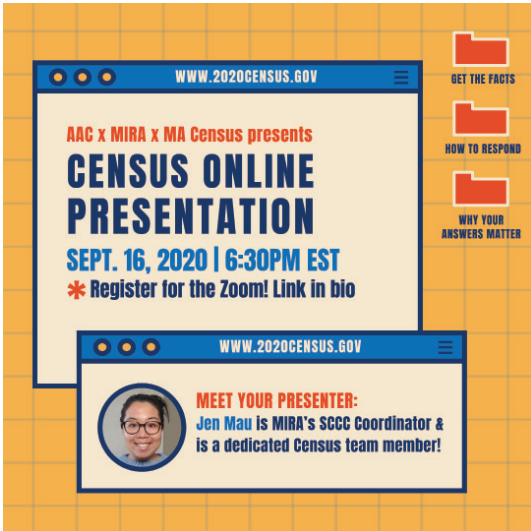
### Native American Heritage Month

For this year's Native American Heritage Month, we wanted to acknowledge the shared experiences and struggles between the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community and indigenous and Native American communities. When people use the term 'AAPI,' they often forget the challenges the PI community faces.

We must be mindful when mentioning 'AAPI' or 'AANHPI' in conversation and consider how each group has unique needs regarding education, housing, employment, health, etc. During the month, we highlighted these experiences and stories through infographics.

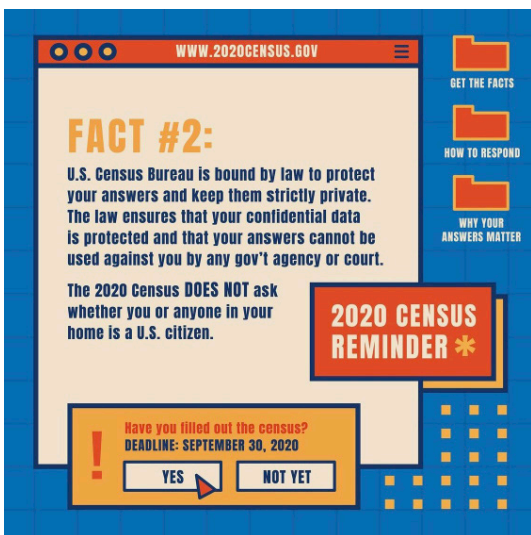


## PROGRAMS, ADVOCACY & EDUCATION



## 2020 Census

We partnered with the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) and Massachusetts Complete Count for an online Census Presentation.



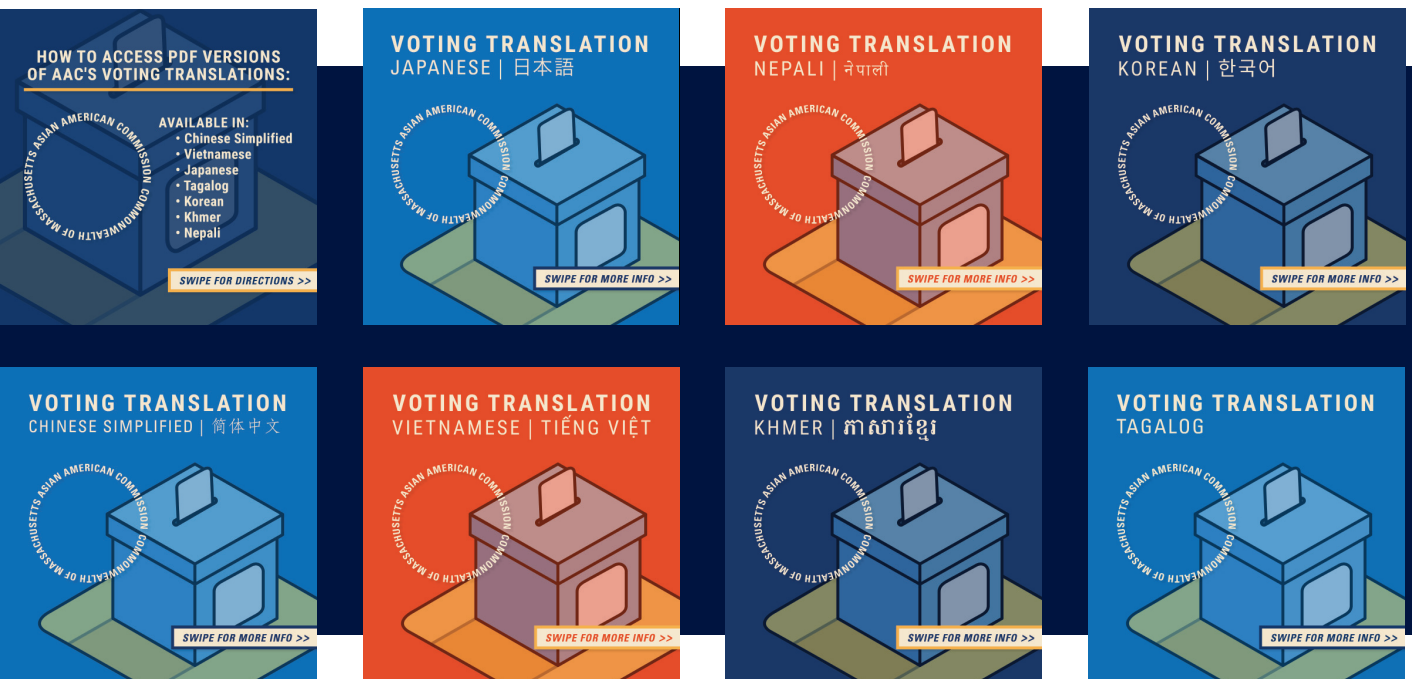
We informed our audiences by sending out reminders on a bi-weekly basis with information regarding the census. We also teamed up with college organizations in MA to distribute infographics and a pledge form to take the census.

### Special thanks to these college institutions:

- Northeastern University
- Mount Holyoke College
- Boston University
- Simmons College
- Amherst College
- Boston College
- UMass Boston
- UMass Amherst
- UMass Lowell
- Smith College

## 2020 Election

With our Research & Policy intern, Lily Tang, the AAC translated voting information into seven different languages: Vietnamese, Chinese Simplified, Khmer, Tagalog, Nepali, Japanese, Korean. Translations were uploaded as PDFs on our website. They were also made into shareable infographics on social media.



### These translations were undertaken by:

- Massachusetts Youth Leadership
- Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence
- Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association
- Springfield Vietnamese Cultural Association
- Chinese Associations of Western MA
- Bayanihan Association of America
- Bhutanese Society of Western MA
- Japanese Bostonians Support Line



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## RESOURCES

### **COVID Relief Grant Recipients**

To support some of our most vulnerable communities at the start of the pandemic, the AAC launched the COVID-19 Emergency Fund Grant for \$10,000 to support small businesses. These one-time grants ranging from \$200 to \$1000 were available on a rolling basis. We were able to help support 14 businesses in Massachusetts.

- Amherst Community Connections
- Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (ATASK)
- Filipino Cancer Network of New England Foundation, Inc (FCNNEF)
- Greater Boston Chinese Golden Age Center
- Philippine-American Mainstream Advocacy for Nonpartisan Associations, Inc. (PAMANA)
- United Hmong of MA
- Springfield Vietnamese Culture Association
- Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
- National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NFFAA)
- Volumelithic
- Joy in Tutoring
- Tuan Pham

### **COVID-19 Resources**

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been devastating to many communities, resulting in a surge of racial violence against the Asian community, a significant loss of jobs, increased domestic violence, anxiety, and increased depression with quarantining, etc.

The AAC found it essential to create a living document explicitly catered to the Asian community that provides updated information on COVID-19 resources, mental health services, domestic/family violence, reporting hate crimes, translation services, legal aid, etc.

**go to: [www.aacommission.org](http://www.aacommission.org)**

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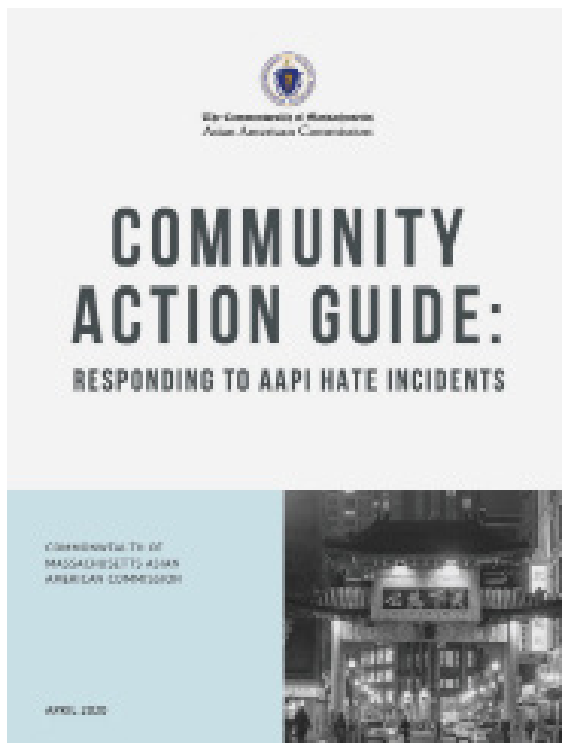
## RESOURCES

### **Racial Violence Against the Asian Community Resources**

Violence, racism, and xenophobia targeted toward the Asian community is not a new phenomenon. It is deeply embedded in the fabric of American history and it has been manifested against different Asian American Pacific Islander communities in many ways over the years. Alongside the pandemic, we have seen a substantial rise in harassment, discrimination, and violence directed towards the AAPI community in Massachusetts and across the nation.

Organizations like Asian Americans Advancing Justice have been documenting hate crimes and hate incidents since 2017 at [www.StandAgainstHatred.org](http://www.StandAgainstHatred.org), which is available in English, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

The staff at the Asian American Commission also created a Community Action Guide to help the community respond to the rise in hate incidents against the AAPI community.



To access, go to our website > Resources > Anti-Asian Racism Resources

**go to: [www.aacommission.org](http://www.aacommission.org)**

# Special Thanks To Our Supporters

We are always grateful to our supporters but especially so in this year of many challenges. Thank you for your steadfast support!

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition  
Asian & Asian American Studies Certificate Program  
Massachusetts Youth Leadership Foundation  
Springfield Vietnamese Cultural Association  
Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence  
Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association  
Bayanihan Association of America  
Chinese Association of Western MA  
Bhutanese Society of Western MA  
Japanese Bostonians Support Line  
Massachusetts Complete Count  
Iskwelahang Pilipino  
#IAMNOTAVIRUS  
Amazon Smile  
Eastern Bank  
Freedom INC.  
APIs CAN

Treasurer, Deborah Goldberg  
Boston City Councilor, Michelle Wu  
Assistant Attorney General, Shafaq Islam  
Professor Richard Chu & Professor C.N. Le  
Jen Mau  
Leverett Wing  
Dr. Mabel S. Lam  
Dr. Liza Talusan  
Helena Berbano  
Zon Moua & M. Adams  
Fiyabomb, Olivia Nguyen  
Mike Keo & Moses Farrow  
Cristina Castro, Bill & Francel Solar  
Nazia Ashraful, Sumaiya Zama, Sumaiyea Uddan  
Candace Nguyen, Patrick G. Lee, Dean Hamer & Joe Wilson  
Elaona Lupetu'ulelei Lemoto, Kalo Daley, Vini Aaron Ciao Saolotoga Daley, La'i Yuen

UMass Boston, UMass Amherst, UMass Lowell, Northeastern University, Boston University, Mount Holyoke College, Simmons College, Amherst College, Boston College, Smith College

# FY2021 Programs and New Initiatives

The Asian American Commission presents:



**Cultivating and Sustaining A Social Justice Practice**  
with Ngoc-Tran Vu  
Moderated by Jay Wong

*Featuring an opening poem recital by young advocate, Lily Li-Nagy!*

Tune in on Zoom & Facebook Live  
**Thursday, May 20<sup>th</sup> @6:00PM EST**

AAC x Commonwealth Seminar presents:

**1-DAY SESSION**  
W/ COMMONWEALTH SEMINAR



This intensive training session will be focused on teaching Asian American leaders how the legislative process really works. Our goal is to encourage diverse leaders to become effective advocates and to pursue careers in public service.

**Saturday, April 24<sup>th</sup> @12:00 - 3:00PM**  
Tune in on Facebook Live & Zoom

AAC x AAWPI x Commonwealth Seminar presents

**Asian American Women in Advocacy**

Panelists



Katie Mai Cinda Danh Shannon Alessandrini Ying Wang

Moderators



Ekta Saksena Megha Prasad

Tune in on Zoom & Facebook Live  
**Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup> @6:30PM EST**

During FY2021, the AAC will continue its successful and well-received events from the previous year, including our Advocacy Day, the Young Leaders Symposium (YLS), traveling Resource Fairs, and the Unity Dinner. We are also introducing new initiatives to address the needs & challenges facing a disproportionate amount of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. These new initiatives will build upon our capacity and increase our geographic and ethnic reach.

The AAC will continue to address financial literacy and economic development within the Asian American and Pacific Islander community by working with the Treasurer's office and local banks to promote financial literacy further and assist small businesses harmed during the pandemic.

The AAC looks forward to representing the interests of and advocating on behalf of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders throughout the Commonwealth!