

# The Mercury News

May 9, 2021

## ONLINE SERIES

### *Panelists to explore issues in AAPI life*

A diverse lineup of Asian American/Pacific Islander community leaders are taking part in a series of panel discussions



**Sal Pizarro**  
*Columnist*

this month that will explore AAPI identity — a topic linked not only to that group's heritage month but the disturbing surge in anti-Asian incidents recently.

The three free online discussions, which begin Thursday and continue on the following two Thursdays, will feature California Attorney General Rob Bonta; Health Trust CEO Michele Lew; Foothill College President Thuy Thi Nguyen; Pawan Dinghra, professor of American Studies at Amherst College; and Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge Johnny Gogo, among others.

Asian Americans for Community Involvement and Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian's office are presenting the sessions. Simitian said they were a follow up to the "Understanding Islam" series his office hosted a few years back and had been in the works for months before the recent surge in anti-Asian violence. But it's those incidents that have lent the series its urgency.

"I've been invited to speak at rallies, and I think the rallies are important, but there's a bigger picture here," Simitian said. The best way to break down barriers, he said, is to get people to engage with other communities, to listen and begin to understand them. "It begins and ends with understanding."

The first of the three discussions will focus on the history and diversity of the AAPI community, the second on prejudice and violence, and the third on identity — how the AAPI community sees itself and how it is perceived by others. Each starts at 6:30 p.m. and is scheduled for 90 minutes. To register for a panel or get more information, go to [tinyurl.com/understandingaapi](http://tinyurl.com/understandingaapi) or [aaci.org](http://aaci.org).

May 7, 2021

## Three-part series on Asian American and Pacific Islander experiences kicks off May 13

*Online panel discussion to focus on history, culture, violence, prejudice and identity*

By Sue Dremann

**C**ulture, history, the origins of prejudice and violence and notions of identity within the Asian American Pacific Islander community will be the subjects of a three-part online series that kicks off on May 13.

The three panel discussions, “Understanding the Asian American/Pacific Islander Experience,” which span the month of May, are designed to broaden the public’s understanding of Asian Americans

and Pacific Islanders and will feature a range of Asian American/Pacific Islander leaders from throughout the country. The events are hosted by the nonprofit organization Asian Americans for Community Involvement and Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian.

Speakers include California Attorney General Rob Bonta; Pawan Dinghra, author of “Managing Multicultural Lives: Asian Americans and the Challenge of Multiple Identities”;

Michele Lew, CEO, The Health Trust; Natalie Masuoka, chair and associate professor of Asian American Studies, UCLA; Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge Johnny Gogo; Helen Hsu, staff psychologist, Asian American specialist and lecturer at Stanford University; Foothill College President Thuy Thi Nguyen and Phillip Yun, CEO, World Affairs Council.

Simitian said the program

### Three-part series

has been in the works for many months and predates the most recent surge in anti-Asian incidents. He noted that while May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and seemed a good time for the series, the rise in hate incidents and crimes against Asian Americans is also a motivating factor for opening community dialogue and building understanding.

According to an April Pew Research Center survey, 81% of

Asian adults say violence against them is increasing, including anti-Asian rhetoric, racism and scapegoating that blames Asians for the pandemic and its impact, he noted. Asian Americans have had a long history of bearing abuses and discrimination in the United States, particularly in California.

Prior studies found that three in four Asian Americans say they have personally experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly due to their race or ethnicity. Asian women are roughly twice as likely to be victims than men, studies show.

The Stop AAPI Hate reporting center has catalogued nearly 3,800 reported hate incidents since March 2020. More than 700 were reported in the Bay Area.

“It’s appalling and unacceptable and makes these conversations all the more important,” he said.

Rallies are not enough to break down long-standing prejudice, violence and exclusionary practices, he noted.

“Real change requires understanding — a willingness to listen, engage, and do the necessary

*(cont. next page)*

## Three-part series

work. I hope that people will join AACI and me to better understand our county's diverse Asian American and Pacific Islander communities," he said.

Simitian was also motivated by a high level of interest after he and his office sponsored the "Understanding Islam" series a few years ago.

"I think most people want to understand the lives and experiences of the folks in their community, and that opportunities like this help them to do just that."

Sarita Kohli, president and CEO of Asian Americans for Community Involvement, said people need to come together as a community and stand against xenophobia, hate and violence.

"I am deeply outraged by the racially motivated attacks and crimes against Asian Americans that are occurring in our community. We hope that knowledge and empathy will empower our communities to support each other and heal together."

The panel discussions will be held virtually, are free and are open to all. They take place on Thursdays, May 13, 20 and 27 from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Attendees can sign up individually for each event:

**May 13: Our Diverse AAPI Community: Who's who in the AAPI community? Histories, stories and experiences, their similarities and differences.**

Pawan Dinghra, professor of American Studies, Amherst College; author of "Managing Multicultural Lives: Asian Americans and the Challenge of Multiple Identities" and co-author of "Asian America."

Michele Lew, CEO, The Health Trust

Natalie Masuoka, associate professor of political science and chair and associate professor of Asian American Studies, UCLA; author of "Multiracial Identity and Racial Politics in the United States" and co-author of "The Politics of Belonging: Race, Public Opinion and Immigration."

**May 20: Prejudice and Violence: Origins of prejudice and violence and how it can be addressed.**

- Rob Bonta, attorney general, State of California
- Johnny Gogo, judge, Santa Clara County Superior Court
- Helen Hsu, Psy.D., lead outreach specialist, staff psychologist, Asian American specialist, and lecturer at Stanford University

**May 27: Notions of Identity: How the AAPI community sees and describes itself. How is it seen and described by others?**

Thuy Thi Nguyen, president, Foothill College

Phillip Yun, CEO, World Affairs Council Pawan Dinghra, professor of American Studies, Amherst College; author of "Managing Multicultural Lives: Asian Americans and the Challenge of Multiple Identities" and co-author of "Asian America."

For more information and to register visit [tinyurl.com/understandingaapi](http://tinyurl.com/understandingaapi) or [www.aaci.org](http://www.aaci.org).

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# Los Altos Town Crier

May 19, 2021

## Panel series addresses AAPI experience

Special to the Town Crier

Asian Americans for Community Involvement and Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian have scheduled virtual panel discussions in May under the theme “Understanding the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Experience,” featuring a group of AAPI leaders and community members.

The discussions aim to provide a foundation for understanding the AAPI community, including its culture and history, origins of prejudice and violence, and notions of identity within the AAPI community.

A discussion on “Our Diverse AAPI Community” was held May 13. Two events remain.

• **6:30-8 p.m. Thursday: “Prejudice and Violence.”**

Where does the prejudice come from? What causes the violence? What can people do about it? Panelists will include California Attorney General Rob Bonta; Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge Johnny Gogo; and Helen Hsu, lead outreach specialist, staff psychologist, Asian-American specialist and lecturer at Stanford University.

• **6:30-8 p.m. May 27: “Notions of Identity.”** How does the AAPI community see and describe itself? How is it seen and described by others? Panelists will include Foothill College president Thuy Thi Nguyen; Phillip Yun, CEO of the World Affairs Council; and Pawan Dinghra, professor of American studies at Amherst College.

To register and for more information, visit [tinyurl.com/understandingaapi](https://tinyurl.com/understandingaapi) or [aaci.org](https://aaci.org).

### Taking a stand

Simitian said the program has been in the works for many months and predates the most recent surge in anti-Asian inci-



TOMOKI CHIEN/TOWN CRIER FILE PHOTO

**Protesters march through downtown Mountain View last month, taking a stand against anti-Asian hate.**

dents. May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, which seemed a “particularly appropriate time for the series,” he noted.

“Over the last year, and in recent months, our communities – our friends, family, colleagues and neighbors – have experienced a resurgence in harassment and violence,” Simitian said. “It’s appalling and unacceptable.”

Like other elected officials, he said he has been able to participate in public rallies.

“But a rally is not enough to break down long-standing prejudice, violence and exclusionary practices,” Simitian added. “Real change requires understanding – a willingness to listen, engage and do the nec-

essary work. I hope that people will join AAPI and me to better understand our county’s diverse Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities.”

Sarita Kohli, president & CEO of AAPI, said she is “deeply outraged” by the racially motivated attacks and crimes against Asian Americans.

“We need to come together as a community and stand against xenophobia, hate and violence,” Kohli said. “AAPI is honored to join Supervisor Simitian and provide an opportunity for discussion and understanding about the diversity of experiences that exist within the AAPI community. We hope that knowledge and empathy will empower our communities to support each other and heal together.”