



## Neurosurgery and Neurology DEI Committees Newsletter May 2022



*During this month we commemorate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage. The editorial below is a joint contribution from Dr. Clark Chen (Neurosurgery - Department Chair), Dr. Sonya Wang (Neurology - Chief for the division of pediatric neurology,) and their son Alec Chen (a freshman at Macalester College).*

In Texas, an Asian man was stabbed, and his young child was threatened because the attacker thought he was Chinese and responsible for the COVID pandemic. In New York, a 67-year-old Asian woman was punched more than 100 times, stomped on, and spat on while bombarded with racial slurs. In San Francisco, an Asian U.S. army veteran was punched in the face repeatedly after the assailant demanded, “go back where you came from.” It is difficult to bear witness to the increasing videos of racists proudly shouting anti-Asian racial slurs or the headlines describing senseless assaults and murders of Asians throughout our country.

Based on some estimates, there has been a 300-500 percent increase in anti-Asian hate crime over the past year. Admittedly, it is not always possible to distinguish race-motivated hate crimes from random acts of violence; however, we cannot ignore the

collective observations of respected journalists, reports of law enforcement, and the experiences of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. More and more, AAPIs are fearing for their safety, without which “the pursuit of happiness” is all but impossible.

Ironically, despite political demagoguery that places the AAPI community in harm’s way during the pandemic, AAPI individuals were over-represented among frontline professionals who provided the healthcare that our society so desperately needed. By some estimates, case fatality among frontline AAPI health professionals during the pandemic is three times higher than in other racial groups. Moreover, AAPI scientists contributed seminal discoveries that made possible the COVID vaccine, public health strategies for COVID containment, and anti-COVID medications. As an example, many historians credit the invention of the N95 mask to the Taiwanese American, Peter Tsai.

Yet, there is little acknowledgment of these sacrifices and contributions. Prominent social scientists have posited that our society expects AAPIs to be the “model minority” who will excel despite inherent societal injustices. Since things that are “expected” are often taken for granted, the needs and contributions of AAPIs have become “invisible” to the greater society. While this “model minority” expectation “shields AAPIs from some forms of systemic racism such as police brutality, it simultaneously obscures Asian Americans’ encounters with other forms of racism”<sup>1</sup>.

Consequently, AAPIs are often excluded in initiatives aimed to address racial disparity and social justice. Worse yet, many institutions actively seek to limit AAPI representation on grounds of diversity.

While this message began as an attempt to celebrate May, the Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, the message has evolved into a call for action after consideration of the recent societal trends. With the rise of China as a global power that challenges U.S. hegemony in economy and ideology, inflammatory anti-Asian rhetoric will

undoubtedly continue. We need to actively combat such dangerous demagoguery and allow the voices of our better angels to rise above the shouting of our baser demons. It is essential that we dispel the myth of the model minority and include AAPIs in our diversity and equity initiatives as we march toward a more perfect union. My hope and prayer will be for the celebration of future AAPI Heritage Months.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/04/19/model-minority-myth-hurts-asian-americans-even-leads-violence/>

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**Do you want to share your love of neurology/neurosurgery with high school students this summer?**



If so, consider participating in Go4Brains, a week-long program offered by the Department of Neuroscience at the University of Minnesota that exposes selected high school students to career opportunities in Neurosciences through short lectures, hands-on activities and mentoring/networking. The goal of this event is to excite and expose students to our fields, and provide useful, practical information for how to begin and succeed in career paths both in research and clinical areas (medical, nursing etc.).

This year's Go4Brains will take place **July 11-15**, and Dr. Carolina Sandoval-Garcia (faculty in the Department of Neurosurgery) is part of the Organizing Committee.

**Everyone is invited to participate! Please email [neurosurgerydei@umn.edu](mailto:neurosurgerydei@umn.edu) if interested. If you want to learn more visit <https://med.umn.edu/neuroscience/diveristy-inclusion/go4brains>**

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**[SAVE THE DATE! DEI Grand Rounds May 20th 7 a.m via Zoom](#)**

**Featuring a special guest Yung-Yi Diana Pan, associate professor of sociology at City University of New York, co-chair of the Brooklyn College Asian American Faculty and Staff Association. She also serves on the Asian American/Asian Research Institute (AAARI)-CUNY. Details and link to follow!**

## Calendar & Resources

1. [University of Minnesota Calendar of Holidays and Religious Observations](#)
2. [Asian Pacific American Resource Center](#)

Other events:

### SADI 'Connect & Learn' Discussion: Part I: 'What is a Woman'? Ketanji Brown Jackson and Women's Rights

**May 19 - 10 - 11 a.m. | [Register](#)**

The first in a two-part series, this discussion will examine the question "What is a woman?" as it relates to women's rights. The question itself came from members of the U.S. Senate, who posed it to Ketanji Brown-Jackson during her Supreme Court confirmation hearing last month.

### Honoring the Memory of George Floyd

**May 25 - 12:15 - 1 p.m. | Mayo Building Courtyard**

Two years have passed since the death of George Floyd, and our Medical School community plans to commemorate the anniversary with nine minutes of silence in addition to student, faculty and leader remarks on how we will advance the critical work enacted over the past two years. In the case of inclement weather, the event will take place in the Mayo Auditorium. The event will also be livestreamed on the U of MN Medical School [Facebook page](#).

Additional references and resources:

[Dr. Shelley N. Chou: from humble beginnings to national leadership](#)

[Chains of Babylon The Rise of Asian America  
https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/first-american-born-chinese-woman-doctor-yks233/14464/](https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/first-american-born-chinese-woman-doctor-yks233/14464/)

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/05/19/asian-american-discrimination/>

<https://time.com/6157617/atlanta-shootings-why-were-still-struggling-with-anti-aapi-hate>

[https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/2016/0516\\_aapi/Asian\\_American\\_Pacific\\_Islander\\_Heritage\\_Month\\_2016\\_slide\\_3.pdf](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/2016/0516_aapi/Asian_American_Pacific_Islander_Heritage_Month_2016_slide_3.pdf)

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/04/30/presidential-proclamation-asian-american-and-pacific-islander-heritage-month>

<https://blog.abim.org/notable-asianpacific-american-physicians-in-u-s-history/>

<https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/hospital-management-administration/9-medical-pioneers-to-celebrate-for-asian-american-and-pacific-islander-heritage-month.html>

<https://nclnet.org/model-minority-myth/>