

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

SPEECH OF

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 9, 2006

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. I would like to thank Congressman HONDA and the Asian Pacific American Caucus for organizing a special order tonight to honor Asian Pacific Americans and the great contributions they have made to our Nation. I would also like to say that I am very proud to be a member of the Tri-Caucus, which unites the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus and Congressional Black Caucus. Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe in the importance of honoring all of our country's unique cultures, and it is truly a privilege to participate in this special order.

Asian Pacific Americans have played a tremendous role in the development of our Nation. I would first like to acknowledge the late Congresswoman Patsy Takemoto Mink, our first woman of color to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. She was a trailblazer for Asian Pacific Americans, and it is wonderful to see that her impact is still felt and that her legacy continues.

As Representative of California's Ninth U.S. Congressional District, APA Heritage month is especially important to me. Asian and Pacific Island American culture has a very large impact in the cities of my district.

My district is the birthplace of Amy Tan, a Chinese-American woman and New York Times bestselling author best known for her novel *The Joy Luck Club*, and its subsequent film adaptation. She has received countless acknowledgments including the Bay Area Book Reviewer's Award. Today, Ms. Tan's novels and short stories are a part of high schools and universities' literary curricula nationwide.

My district is also the birthplace of Fred Korematsu, born in Oakland to Japanese immigrants, who challenged the World War II internment of Japanese American citizens. As an American citizen Mr. Korematsu refused to go to an internment camp, but he was arrested, sent to one in 1942 and branded a spy by newspapers. He opposed the internment policy in the Supreme Court, but in its ignoble 1944 decision the Supreme Court upheld the policy. In 1983 Mr. Korematsu appealed his conviction, which a Federal court overturned acknowledging that the Government's case at the time had been based on misleading and racially biased information. President Bill Clinton awarded Mr. Korematsu the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998, honoring Mr. Korematsu for fighting for human rights and ensuring the very liberties that created this great Nation.

Today, the legacy of Asian Pacific American leaders such as Ms. Tan and Mr. Korematsu

is apparent in the numerous remarkable programs and initiatives in APA communities throughout my district. There are several that I would like to recognize, including Oakland Asian Students Educational Services also known as OASES. As the city of Oakland is one of three cities in the Bay Area that has the lowest high school graduation rates for Asian students, this organization works to decrease cultural gaps in education. OASES reaches out to all youth with limited resources and limited educational opportunities, particularly children of Asian Pacific Islander families.

I would also like to recognize the Oakland Asian Cultural Center. This center works by employing the belief that upholding cultural tradition and honoring cultural heritage are at the core of maintaining healthy and lively communities. The center presents a variety of cultural festivities and artistic expression in dance, literature, music and visual arts. The center is an excellent resource for understanding the legacy of Asian and Pacific Island Americans and their great influence on the cultural identities of our communities.

My district is also home to several of the nation's leading health care providers for APA communities. Asian Community Mental Health Services, for example, is an organization that offers access to and increases community acceptance of mental healthcare, which in many APA communities remains taboo. Asian Health Services is another organization that works to ensure that members of APA communities can overcome challenges to obtaining high-quality, affordable healthcare due to language barriers, income, lack of insurance coverage and cultural differences.

Lastly, I would like to bring special attention to Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (ACRJ) and its Executive Director, Ms. Evelyne Shen. Founded in 1989, ACRJ has been a longtime leader in ensuring that APA women and girls are equipped with the tools to make important decisions about their reproductive health. Under the leadership of Ms. Shen, ACRJ places reproductive health and freedom at the center of promoting social and economic freedom for APA women in the shadows of patriarchal cultures. During her nearly two decades of community organizing and eight years at ACRJ, Ms. Shen has become a leader in building a social justice movement in APA communities, which is one of the fastest growing constituencies in California and in my district. I commend Ms. Shen and ACRJ's dedication to assisting APA women to obtain the American promise of "liberty and justice for all."

As our Nation is home to so many people from all over the world, it is important that we continue to bring attention to the issues that affect all communities. It is our responsibility to ensure that no one is ignored and that equal attention is given to all groups. It is also our duty to seek justice for those who are underrepresented. And, lastly, it is our privilege to come together to celebrate the accomplishments of the many leaders throughout American history, who have embodied excel-

lence in advancing the principles of democracy, freedom and justice for all of our communities and strengthening the foundation of America.

Mr. Speaker, again I would like to thank Mr. HONDA and the APA Caucus for inviting me to participate in this special order. Let us continue to unite, pay tribute to Asian Pacific Americans and remember the importance their outstanding contributions to our Nation.

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Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, today and throughout the month of May, we celebrate the many contributions Asian Pacific Americans have made to the fabric of our communities and to this Nation as a whole.

More than 100 Members of Congress work together in the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus to promote Asian Pacific American issues and concerns, and I'm pleased that we are led by my long-time friend and colleague, Congressman MIKE HONDA.

Congressman HONDA and I are proud to represent San Jose, California and surrounding areas, a community blessed with diversity and culture from around the world, including close to 350,000 Asian Pacific Americans.

Some notable Asian Pacific Americans from our area include Norman Mineta, the longest serving Secretary in the history of the U.S. Department of Transportation, the first Asian American mayor of a major U.S. city, and the first Asian American Cabinet member during the Clinton Administration.

San Jose Councilmember Madison Nguyen is another extraordinary Asian Pacific American. She is the first Vietnamese American woman elected to office in the State of California.

Another distinguished Asian Pacific American from the San Jose area is Dr. Allan Seid who founded Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI), the largest social services nonprofit organization serving the Asian Pacific American community in Santa Clara County.

Vinod Khosla has contributed immensely to Silicon Valley as a distinguished venture capitalist and a co-founder of Sun Microsystems, headquartered in Santa Clara, California, a company that has grown into one of the largest providers of computers, computer components, software, and information-technology services.

In this Congress, there are five Asian Pacific Americans serving our Nation and their communities as members of the House of Representatives, as well as one delegate from

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