

Historic White House Summit expands opportunity for AAPIs

Written by Administrator
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Moderator Gautam Raghavan, Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Burwell, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Chair Jenny Yang, and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy participate in a fireside chat at the White House Summit on AAPIs. (Photo by Will Kim)

WASHINGTON — On May 12, during Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (Initiative) hosted the first-ever White House Summit on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders at The George Washington University.

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Nearly 2,000 community leaders, federal officials, and members of the public representing over 40 states and the Pacific Islands attended the Summit, along with hundreds tuning into the livestream.

This unprecedented event for the AAPI community welcomed community leaders, celebrities and guests from all over the country.

The Summit highlighted the Obama Administration's policies and programs over the past six years and outlined efforts for the next two years and decades to come.

The Summit's theme was Connect, Share and Mobilize.

"This is a historic turning point for the AAPI community. Federal representatives, community leaders, youth and others from all over convened today to connect with one another and find ways to continue working together to expand opportunity for AAPIs everywhere," said Initiative Executive Director Kiran Ahuja.

The Summit featured six Cabinet Secretaries and multiple federal agency leaders highlighting accomplishments benefiting the AAPI community.

As part of the event, a fact sheet on these agency accomplishments was released.

During the Summit, Dr. Vivek Murthy, Surgeon General of the United States, was announced as Co-Chair of the Initiative, serving alongside Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

In addition, three newly appointed members of the President's Advisory Commission on AAPIs were introduced: Jacob James Fitisemanu, Jr., Sanjita Pradhan, and Paul Watanabe.

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They join 16 members of the Commission who were appointed last May and represent the diverse AAPI community for the Administration.

In addition to conversations with federal officials and AAPI leaders, the Summit featured artistic presentations by distinguished AAPI artists.

These presentations served as a medium to highlight and address issues that impact AAPI communities around the country, as well as to celebrate the accomplishments of AAPI achievement in arts and entertainment.

These acts included an Hawaiian chant, cultural drumming, and an artistic presentation by the Jabbawoockeez, a prominent dance troupe.