



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ASIAN PACIFICS IN POLITICS & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

2022 NAAPPPA 40 UNDER 40

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2022 NAAPPPA 40 UNDER 40 LIST

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The National Association of Asian Pacifics in Politics and Public Affairs (NAAPPPA) is proud to present the 2022 list of the top 40 AAPI political operatives and public affairs professionals under 40 years of age.

NAAPPPA established this list in 2016 to highlight the growing number of AAPIs who are rising stars in the professional unelected side of politics. These honorees represent trailblazing AAPI campaign strategists and operatives, lobbyists, legislative staff, and corporate public affairs professionals on all sides of the aisle that work behind the scenes to elect and advance AAPI candidates and the AAPI community.

These elite individuals are breaking the meek Asian model minority stereotype by excelling in the rough and tumble, rule-bending, and bare-knuckle world of American politics. NAAPPPA is a non-partisan non-profit national organization dedicated to promote and develop Asian American and Pacific Islander career advancement and excellence in political consulting, public affairs, and legislative advocacy through networking, innovative training, and professional development. **Congratulations Class of 2022!**



Mary Lou Akai-Ferguson, Political Activist & Organizer | Mary Lou Akai-Ferguson is a progressive organizer & political activist with a focus on outreach and turnout in immigrant communities. Most recently, she served as campaign manager for Michelle Wu's campaign for mayor of Boston, leading the effort to elect the first woman and first person of color as mayor of the city. After their victory, Mary Lou continued as Chief of Staff to the mayor. Prior to running Michelle Wu's campaign, she served as Elizabeth Warren's Midwest Organizing Director and AAPI Outreach Director during her 2020 presidential campaign. Before entering politics, Mary Lou was a high school algebra teacher.



Michelle Alexander, Charter School Growth Fund | Michelle currently advances the stories of leaders advancing high-quality and equitable education through public charter schools. She's led communications, advocacy, and/or organizational management efforts at a national trade organization; a District Attorney's office in Colorado; and political campaigns and efforts in Colorado, West Virginia, and a Presidential race. Having advocated for her immigrant parents and family from a young age – and now as a working mom of twin girls – Michelle volunteers for organizations championing meaningful changes and public safety for vulnerable communities. She cares deeply about gun violence prevention, and served on a national board advancing the work. Michelle earned a Bachelors from Boston University; a Certificate in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion from Stanford; and is currently pursuing a Masters from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.



Jessica Caloza, Deputy Chief of Staff, CA Attorney General Rob Bonta | Attorney General Bonta is the state's top lawyer and law enforcement official. Jessica serves as a senior policy advisor and oversees the external affairs and operations in Southern California. She has spent over a decade in various executive roles in government, including as a Commissioner on the Los Angeles Board of Public Works, the governing and oversight body of nearly 6,000 employees responsible for delivering critical services and infrastructure projects for 4 million residents. She was the first Filipina on the Board and was appointed by Mayor Eric Garcetti in 2019. Previously, Jessica served as a senior member on the Mayor's executive team. Prior to joining the Mayor's Office, Jessica served in the Obama Administration in the U.S. Department of Education. She has also been a campaign aide to several members of Congress, including former Rep. Xavier Becerra. In 2012, she was a community organizer for President Obama's campaign and helped lead key offices in Virginia. Jessica graduated from the U.C. San Diego with a double major in Political Science: International Relations and Ethnic Studies.



Vivian Cao, District Director, CA State Senator Shannon Grove | After serving as the Executive Director of a local after-school program in Orange County for 13 years, Vivian worked for the Orange County Board of Supervisors as a Policy Advisor and Community Liaison, acting as the primary point of contact between the First District and the AAPI community. She then joined the Office of Senator Ling Ling Chang as a District Representative, where she was able to leverage her community relationships to quickly mobilize large distributions of hand sanitizers, masks, canned foods, bread, and other essential items to vulnerable populations as early as March 2020. Currently, Vivian serves as the District Director for Senator Shannon Grove, whose district includes the Central Valley and High Desert communities. She was recently awarded the 2021 Volunteer of the Year from the Bakersfield Metro Community Emergency Response Team, and was appointed as a Community Volunteer Leader with the American Red Cross for her work as a congregate Shelter Manager during the wildfires of Fall 2020.



Gregory Allan Datu Cendana, President of Can't Stop! Won't Stop! Consulting | Gregory is also co-founder of The People's Collective for Justice and Liberation. He was the first openly gay and youngest-ever Executive Director of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance. Gregory was also the first openly gay and first Filipino American elected Chair of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, co-founder of political diversity initiative Inklusv, and serves on the board of United We Dream and Asian Mental Health Collective. DC Mayor Muriel Bowser appointed him the Board of Pharmacy and Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs after he served a two-year term on the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Advisory Committee under the leadership of Mayor Vince Gray. Gregory has been named one of Washington DC's most influential 40-and-under young leaders, one of the 30 Most Influential Asian Americans Under 30, DC's Inaugural Power 30 Under 30™ Award Recipients, and the "Future of DC Politics".



Linette Choi, District Director, U.S. Representative Young Kim | Linette Choi currently serves as the District Director for U.S. Representative Young Kim where she oversees the management and operation of the district office and serves as a key liaison to the local community. Born and raised in California, she started her career working as a Field Organizer working on AAPI Outreach for the California Republican Party. She also served in Assemblymember Young Kim's office as a Field Representative and Assemblymember Phillip Chen's office as a District Director before working as the Deputy Campaign Manager of the Young Kim for Congress Campaign. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in History from the UC Irvine.



Ricky Choi, Director of Government and Community Relations, San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments | Ricky has nearly two decades of experience in public affairs, local and state government, stakeholder engagement and strategic communications. Ricky previously served as Communications Director at BuildLACCD, Community Relations Manager at the Alameda Corridor-East Construction Authority, worked for CA State Assemblymember and Board of Equalization Member Judy Chu, former CA Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante, and at the U.S. Attorney's Office. Ricky is a Monterey Park Planning Commissioner and served on the Alhambra Civil Service Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission. He was elected to the LA County Democratic Central Committee and served on the boards of CADEM API Caucus, LA County Young Democrats and West San Gabriel Valley Young Democrats. He is currently Board President of the Asian Youth Center and on the boards of OCA-Greater LA, Asian Professional Exchange, Planned Parenthood Pasadena and San Gabriel Valley, and Planned Parenthood Advocacy Project Los Angeles County. Ricky graduated from UCLA with a bachelor's degree in Political Science and minor in Public Policy.



Tiffany Chu, Chief of Staff to Boston Mayor Michelle Wu | Tiffany Chu is a designer and a planner. She is Chief of Staff to Mayor Michelle Wu, the first-ever elected woman, person of color, and AAPI to serve as the Mayor of Boston. Previously, Tiffany was the CEO & Co-founder of Remix the collaborative software platform for transportation planning used by 500+ cities globally, and has been recognized as a Tech Pioneer by the World Economic Forum and BloombergNEF for furthering sustainability and equity in the field. Tiffany has served as a Commissioner of the San Francisco Department of the Environment and sat on the city's Congestion Pricing Policy Advisory Committee. Previously, Tiffany was at Code for America, Y Combinator, Zipcar, and Continuum. She's been named in Forbes' 30 Under 30, LinkedIn's Next Wave of Leaders Under 35, and featured at SXSW, Helsinki Design Week, the New York Times Cities for Tomorrow Conference, Cooper Hewitt, and more. Tiffany has a background in architecture and urban planning from MIT.



Sonali Desai, Chief of Staff, U.S. Representative Judy Chu | Sonali Desai serves as Chief of Staff for Representative Judy Chu (CA-27). In this role she manages the Congressman's teams in Washington, DC and Los Angeles, CA and serves as her chief advisor. She also oversees the work of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) which Rep. Chu chairs. The Caucus is comprised of members of the AAPI community and those who are dedicated to promoting the well-being of AAPIs. Prior to joining Rep. Chu's office, Sonali was a Legislative Assistant for Representative Melvin Watt (NC-12). Sonali is the daughter of immigrants and grew up in the small town of Greenwood, South Carolina. She currently lives in Alexandria, VA with her partner and their dog, Zora.



Alisa Finn, Managing Director, Optimizations, Targeted Victory | Alisa Finn joined Targeted Victory in 2020 after a seven-year career on Wall Street. Her expertise in trading and buy-side fundraising quickly gained her a seat at the table for political fundraising and strategy. Currently, Alisa is the Managing Director of an analytics team within Targeted Victory's marketing group, where she works to optimize fundraising efforts across all of our political clients. During her short time at the company, she has proven to be an invaluable asset in building a more data-driven approach to fundraising. Alisa graduated from Stanford University with a BA in Ancient Greek.

“The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.”

-Mark Twain



Mason Fong, Director of Government Relations at Peregrine | Peregrine is a tech startup based in San Francisco. Mason has over a decade of experience working in government across California at the federal, state and local levels. He received a B.A. in Urban Studies and Planning from UC San Diego with a minor in Political Science after transferring from De Anza College. Prior to this role, Mason was appointed by California Governor Gavin Newsom to serve as his Northern California Deputy Regional Director of External Affairs. In this role, he was responsible for managing external engagement for the Governor across more than 30 California Counties from the Bay Area to the Oregon border. Mason has also served in various public policy and community liaison roles for two members of Congress, a San Jose Vice Mayor and San Jose Councilmember, and two Chambers of Commerce. He was also elected in 2018 as the youngest Councilmember at the time to the Sunnyvale City Council and the 3rd AAPI in the City's history.



Jassy Grewal, Legislative Director, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Western States Council | Jaskiran "Jassy" Grewal graduated in 2015 from the UC Davis with a degree in Political Science-Public Service and Sociology and obtained her Master's in Public Administration from the University of Southern California Price School of Public Policy in 2020. She is a first generation Punjabi and the first one in her family to go to college in the United States and the first to get a Master's degree. Jassy started with Teach for America in 2015 before joining United Food and Commercial Workers Western States Council in 2017. Jassy was then promoted to Legislative Aide and Legislative Advocate and now serves as UFCW Western States Council's Legislative Director where she represents over 200,000 workers in the retail grocery, pharmaceutical, cannabis, and other industries in California, Nevada and Arizona. In this role she is at the forefront of state political and legislative efforts advocating for labor rights and fighting for workplace protections for essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthening UFCW members' lives and well-being.



Gina Hwang, Vice President at Targeted Victory | Targeted Victory is one of the largest performance marketing and political consulting firms in the country. Gina oversees the company's business operations as it continues to scale as the most robust fundraising operation in Republican politics. Prior to moving into an Operations role, Gina spent seven years servicing clients in executing strategic online fundraising and marketing programs, including managing all of the digital operations of one of the most closely watched races of the 2014 election cycle, Joni Ernst's 2014 Senate campaign, as well as turning Senator Rubio's 2013 State of the Union Response "water bottle moment" into \$250k+ raised in Marco Rubio water bottle sales for his PAC in just a couple of weeks. Today, she is focused on driving operational strategy and planning, building effective tools for recruiting, onboarding and retention, and creating scalable solutions to ensure Targeted Victory continues to run successful programs for its clients and professionally developing its staff members to continue to cultivate talent within the industry.



Sam Hyun, Political Director, Sonia Chang-Díaz for Governor | Sam Hyun is the former Chairperson of the AAPI Commission and currently serves as Political Director for Sonia Chang-Díaz's gubernatorial campaign. He earned his Master's of Public Policy and Master's of Business Administration from Brandeis University's Heller School. Sam has spent ten years working in politics, non-profits, and advocacy. He was also honored as one of the Boston Globe's awardees for Bostonian of the Year in 2021 for his advocacy for the AAPI Community.



Andrew Jiang, Founder & Principal, AJ Campaigns | Andrew Jiang began his career with Obama for American in 2008 working on the National Advance Team. He then went on to work for Bennet for Colorado in 2010 and Field Director for CA-26 in 2012. He then worked for SEIU-ULTCW. In 2015, Andrew was the Campaign Manager for David Ryu for LA City Council, helping to elect the 1st Korean-American and only 2nd AAPI to the LA City Council. As a Principal at a national firm, he worked for many campaigns, as well as for the DSCC, DCCC, unions, and state parties. Andrew has always been a strong advocate for AAPIs in politics and has worked with AAPI candidates at all levels. His work has received prestigious AAPC Pollie Awards in various field and foreign language categories. He continues to fight for AAPI representation and is a founding member of The Ronin Project. He is an active member of SAG-AFTRA and was an Executive Producer for the award-winning movie, *The Paper Tigers*.



Nainoa Johsens, Director of Asian Pacific American Media for the Republican National Committee | Nainoa Johsens currently serves as the Director of Asian Pacific American Media for the Republican National Committee, joining the RNC prior to the 2022 midterm cycle. Before his position at the RNC, he worked at a digital and email marketing agency in Washington DC. Nainoa also served as a Jesse Unruh Assembly Fellow for Assemblymember Vince Fong in Sacramento, overseeing his Public Employees' Retirement legislative portfolio. Raised in Santa Cruz, California, Nainoa is a member of the Hawai'i Society of Washington DC and is a graduate of Hillsdale College.



Nic Jordan, Executive Director, ASPIRE PAC | Nic is ASPIRE PAC's first-ever Executive Director, advocating for national outreach and targeted communication investments in the AAPI community. Previously, he served as Chief of Staff to former Congressman Gil Cisneros, who represented one of the largest AAPI communities in the country. He was also the Campaign Manager on the Cisneros for Congress campaign and the only Asian American manager on a Red to Blue race across the country in 2018. His political career also includes communications positions for the John Chiang for California Governor campaign, Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), and as a Speechwriter for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. He holds a J.D. in Public Policy from the Pacific McGeorge, School of Law and a B.A. from Fordham University.



John P.B. Jose, Director of APA Engagement, Republican National Committee | Prior to his current position, John served on Rep. Brett Guthrie's Congressional staff, as a Field Organizer in the 2021 Georgia Senate Runoffs, and was a former Regional Field Director for Sen. Mitch McConnell's re-election campaign in Kentucky for the 2020 Cycle. John was born in Manila, Philippines and immigrated to Louisville, Kentucky when he was 13 years old. He got involved with local, county, and state races. He also was elected as the first AAPI Student-body President of Northern Kentucky University where he earned his degree in Organizational Leadership and minored in Political Science. John speaks 3 languages including Spanish and Tagalog. In his free time, John enjoys backpacking, getting lost in museums, going on long walks and bike rides, and with high hopes, trying to copy his mom's sacred recipes in the kitchen.



Noah Kim, Senior Account Executive at AL Media | Noah Kim brings a decade of campaign experience to lead paid media and messaging strategy for some of the highest-profile Democratic candidates in the country. Prior to joining AL, Noah served as a Political Desk for the DCCC's Independent Expenditure program to help net 40 Democratic House seats in 2018. He has previously managed, organized, and fundraised at the state and federal levels, including managing Kathy Tran's successful 2017 campaign for the Virginia House of Delegates. Under Noah's leadership, Tran became the first AAPI woman elected to Virginia state government and first Vietnamese American elected at any level in the Commonwealth. Noah has made it his mission to elect leaders from underrepresented communities and to engage and empower those communities too often left out of the conversation.



Nancy Lê, Chief of Staff to San José Councilmember Sylvia Arenas | Nancy Lê distinguished herself when she became the first Vietnamese American Chief of Staff in the City of San José which serves the largest Vietnamese/American community in any city outside of Vietnam. She has dedicated her career to public service for over a decade and she has worked on intergovernmental public policy across local, state, and federal jurisdictions with specialization in strategic legislative planning and policy development on issues regarding race and equity, family friendly initiatives and childcare, public safety and hate crimes, and gender-based violence prevention. Nancy is the proud daughter of refugees and she inherited their resilient spirit, fierce tenacity, and passion to serve the community. She serves as a board member of the Bay Area Asian Pacific American Legislative Staffers and has demonstrated her ability to lead with authenticity while supporting the pipeline of AAPI professionals. She earned her B.A. with Honors from the UC Davis and is proud to return to serve the city that raised her.



Allison Lim, Chief of Staff CA Assemblymember Alex Lee | Prior to serving as Chief of Staff to Assemblymember Alex Lee who was elected in 2020, Allison served as his campaign manager and helped him win a spectacular upset victory in a crowded and competitive Democratic primary. Assemblymember Alex Lee is considered a rising star in progressive state house politics and has authored landmark reform proposals. Allison also worked for Assemblymember Phil Ting and has a background both in the public and private sector, working at tech companies, and in education. Prior to her work in the State Assembly, she taught English in Colombia and has studied in Taiwan and the United Kingdom. Allison graduated from the UC Irvine with a double major in Political Science and Sociology.



Denise Luu, Assistant Vice President of Communications and Media at East West Bank | East West Bank is one of the largest minority depository institutions in the country. In this role, she leads and supports the bank's public relations and public affairs efforts. Before joining East West Bank, Denise was a Corporate and Policy Communications Advisor at Southern California Edison, where she led communications campaigns that helped advance the utility's clean energy goals. She previously worked at strategic communications firm BerlinRosen, where she managed media relations for some of the nation's most recognizable labor unions, plaintiffs' law firms, healthcare foundations, and environmental and social justice organizations. She also worked at Imprinta Communications Group, where she developed an expertise in outreach to the AAPI community. Denise holds a master's degree in public diplomacy from the University of Southern California and a bachelor's degree in communication from Cal Poly Pomona. She is a State Department alumna.



Caeli Mahon, Vice President at Targeted Victory | Targeted Victory is one of the largest performance marketing and political consulting firms in the country. Caeli Mahon is a leading digital strategist, Caeli has advised dozens of national committees, Senate, House and gubernatorial campaigns on everything from fundraising to social media to digital advertising over the past several election cycles. In her current capacity, she leads a team of multi-faceted strategists dedicated to optimizing marketing processes and opportunities for Targeted Victory, establishes best practices for the company, and acts as a senior advisor to several high profile organizations. A Colorado native, Caeli previously worked on Capitol Hill and holds both a Bachelors and Master of Political Management degree from The George Washington University.



Paulette Maskarino, Senior Field Representative/Legislative Aide, CA

Assemblymember Phillip Chen | Paulette serves as a liaison between Assemblymember Chen and the District's community of 450,000 constituents. She advances education policy by maintaining strong connections and knowledge of the Districts' issue priorities. Previously, she was a policy analyst intern for the U.S. Dept. of Labor in Washington, D.C. As a daughter of Filipino immigrant parents, she was inspired to work in the public sector and give back to the country that gave her parents the American dream. She has her B.A. in Political Science and Minor in International Relations from Cal State Fullerton. Most, recently she earned her M.S. in Business Management and Leadership with Honors from Pepperdine University's Graziadio Business School.



Lindsay McLaggan, Public Policy Advocate, CA Cattlemen's Foundation | Lindsay McLaggan is a courageous and resilient AAPI worthy of recognition. As the 2021 Miss Placer County, she regularly volunteers on top of pursuing her political career. After three years of working in the California Cattle Foundation as a Public Policy Advocate, Lindsay is thrilled to be recognized by NAAPPPA. Her mother's side of the family is Chinese, with Chen's family name. Though Lindsay is often told she doesn't look Chinese, she values her family's culture and traditions. Lindsay studied Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan to further build a relationship with her heritage and was a cheerleader for National Cheng-Chi University. As a Chinese American, Lindsay values inclusion and intercultural respect. Whether in pageantry, the political arena, or personally, Lindsay is a true representative of inclusion and cultural appreciation.



Bijan Mehryar, State & Local Government Affairs Manager, Salesforce | Bijan is an experienced government affairs and public policy professional currently working in-house at Salesforce. In this role, he represents Salesforce's interests across several western states at the state and local level. Previously, he worked at the League of California Cities where he advocated on behalf of cities before the Legislature, Governor's Office, and multiple state agencies. Prior to Cal Cities, he worked as a budget and policy analyst at the California Department of Finance providing recommendations and analysis, on billions of dollars of state expenditures and a high volume of legislation annually. He currently serves on the Boards of Directors for the Bay Area Council and sf.Citi. He is an alumnus of the Capital Fellows Program (2015-16 Senate Fellow) and a graduate of UC San Diego.



Andrew Mendoza, Legislative Director, CA Assemblymember Tom Lackey | Andrew Mendoza manages implementation of legislative priorities while consulting on budget and policy votes. He has successfully shepherded legislative proposals, budget and audit requests. He has a keen interest in working on trauma-informed policy solutions to improve services for victim-survivors and vulnerable communities. He began working in the capitol community in a legislative office, a state political party headquarters, a member office of a regulatory tax board, a political consulting and public affairs firm and a trade association. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree with majors in Political Science and English from UC Davis. He also studied under two distinguished scholars and completed a research trip across Israel and disputed territories to better understand the Arab-Israeli conflict. His grandparents and great-grandparents immigrated to California from the Canton region of China in the 1960s and they owned and operated a restaurant in Sacramento's Chinatown.

“If you suffer without succeeding, it is so others will succeed after you. If you succeed without suffering, it is because others have suffered before you”

- Unknown



Tommy Nguyen, Professional Staff Member, U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence | Tommy currently serves as a Professional Staff Member on the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. His portfolio includes oversight of the US intelligence community and the defense intelligence enterprise. With over a decade of experience on Capitol Hill, Tommy has advised numerous Republican senators in areas of national security and foreign policy. In addition to his public service on the Hill, Tommy also serves in the US Army Reserve as a military intelligence officer. He is a veteran of combat in Afghanistan and is a recipient of the Bronze Star, among other awards.



Peter Oh, Field Representative for CA Assemblymember Steven Choi | Peter Oh is a Field Representative for constituent services and recent graduate from the UC San Diego with a degree in Political Science. Assemblymember Choi currently represents the 68th Assembly District that is home to a sizeable AAPI population in California's Orange County. Peter is described to have a magnetic force in the workplace. He uses his positive attitude and tireless energy to encourage others to work hard to succeed. Peter is inspired daily by his loving parents who have encouraged him to embrace his AAPI heritage. In his free time, Peter likes to play soccer and go bowling with his family.



Jas Sajjan, Director of Communications and Public Affairs, San Francisco 49ers | Jas has led major public-private partnerships for the 49ers including converting Levi's Stadium into the largest vaccination site in California (350,000 vaccines administered) and converting Levi's Stadium into a voting center during the November 2020 election. Additionally, he leads engagement with local municipalities and the state legislature to ensure the organization continues to play an active role on issues impacting the Bay Area region and state, such as housing, sustainability, and transportation. Before Jas joined the 49ers, he spent several years at the Glover Park Group in Washington, D.C., assisting clients in the technology, energy, and transportation sectors on issues before Congress. Outside of the office, Jas serves as an Advisor for the National Sikh Campaign, a non-profit focused on reducing faith-based hate crimes. Jas earned a B.A. in Political Science from American University in Washington, D.C. and currently resides in San Francisco.



Ghazal Seino, Field Representative, CA Assemblymember Phillip Chen | Ghazal has a unique background being of Persian and Japanese-American descent. She has been working for Assemblymember Phillip Chen as a field representative for 5 1/2 years. While she has been working for Assemblymember Chen, Ghazal graduated from Cal State Fullerton in 2018 with her Bachelor's degree in Political Science and in 2021 she received her Master's degree in Public Administration from Cal State Long Beach. Besides her extensive studies, Ghazal served as membership director and secretary for the Orange County Young Republicans between 2018 and 2020. Most recently, she was appointed to be secretary of the California Young Republican Federation. When she isn't working or volunteering her time, Ghazal loves traveling with her friends and family.



Samantha Seng, Legislative Director and Policy Advisor, NextGen Policy | Samantha manages NextGen Policy's annual state legislative and budget packages and leads on education policy. Samantha's policy work includes building coalitions and advocating for policies that promote prosperity for all students at every stage of their educational career. Samantha also worked for members of the California State Assembly, including leadership offices. Samantha came from the non-profit sector mentoring and tutoring low-income and at-risk youth throughout the Bay Area. Samantha continues to mentor students, helping to establish and volunteering for Improve Your Tomorrow, a northern California non-profit organization providing wrap-around services for young men of color. Samantha serves on the board of Girl.gov Foundation based in San Diego as the Director of Policy to empower women and girls through community. Samantha is a proud child of immigrants, first generation college graduate, and the first in the family to hold a Master's Degree - in education from Lesley University.



Rina Shah, Principal & Founder, Rilax Strategies | Rina is a political strategist, commentator, and public affairs executive named by Business Insider as one of 20 “Women to Watch Ahead of 2022.” Rilax Strategies specializes in political intelligence and strategic communications. Shah spent years on Capitol Hill as a senior aide for Reps. Scott Garrett (NJ-5) and Jeff Miller (FL-1). She has served on 3 U.S. presidential campaigns and advised over 40 political campaigns. Shah is an advisory board member of the Renew Democracy Initiative, sits on the Meridian International Center’s Global Leadership Council, a Co-Founder/ Board Member Emeritus of the Women’s Public Leadership Network, and serves on the boards of VoteRunLead, Women’s Congressional Staff Foundation, WCOIN, and Represent Women. Shah regularly appears on-air at MSNBC, PBS, BBC, and Al Jazeera. Her articles and comments appear in national outlets ranging from The Week to the Washington Post. Shah is a native of southern West Virginia and the daughter of immigrants from Uganda and India.



Shreya Singh Hernández, Data Programs Manager, Planned Parenthood Federation of America | Shreya Singh Hernández is a data-driven engagement strategist focused on social impact. In the 2020 election cycle, Shreya helped launch Planned Parenthood Votes’ inaugural AAPI voter outreach program deepening national and local relationships and offering language access grants to local AAPI partners. She also serves as the co-chair of PPFA’s AAPI employee resource group and has held several leadership roles in PPFA DC union with SEIU local 500. Shreya has been committed to AAPI community organizing from the start of her career at Raksha, Inc. and the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to her current work with the AAPI Victory Alliance as the Political Director. Shreya is from Marietta, GA, a graduate of the University of Georgia, and a proud 1.5 generation Indian immigrant.



Oliver Truong, Executive Outreach Director, Lead PA | Oliver Truong is a political and partnerships leader with over 15 years of experience across sectors including nonprofits, international organizations, and early stage startups. In politics, Oliver worked on campaigns in California, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Most recently, he managed a top-tier competitive Pennsylvania State Senate campaign and was trained by Lead PA. At Lead PA and Lead PA Institute, Oliver is the Executive Outreach Director and is responsible for building partnerships across the Pennsylvania and national progressive landscape to grow Lead PA and Lead PA Institute’s impact. Part of his role is to build the bench and pipeline of leaders by recruiting and training individuals to run for office and manage campaigns at all levels of the ballot in Pennsylvania. Oliver earned a Master of Business Administration from the University of Michigan and a Bachelor’s Degree in International Affairs from the George Washington University.



Kevin Wen, Government Affairs Manager, Edison International | Kevin Wen is the Government Affairs Manager for Edison International, the holding company for Southern California Edison. In this role, Kevin manages the day-to-day operations associated with the Edison International Political Action Committee (EIPAC), supports the Political Compliance program and ensures an integrated approach to political engagement efforts, including election analysis. Kevin has nearly a decade of experience consulting political campaigns, statewide ballot measures, advocacy issues and communications for Fortune 500 companies, non-profits and elected officials. Before Edison, Kevin served as Public Relations Director for Grassroots Lab and completed his Master of Public Policy degree from the University of Southern California.



Nancy Xiong, Executive Director, Hmong Innovating Politics | Nancy Xiong grew up in Merced, CA as the youngest of ten siblings and is the daughter of Hmong refugee parents from Southeast Asia. These experiences fueled her passion for health and education equity for underserved populations. In her previous capacity, she worked as an AmeriCorps VISTA for a local nonprofit helping to build advocacy and organizational capacity in the Southeast Asian community throughout California. Her background also includes youth development, program management, community engagement and outreach, and working closely with first-generation college students and young SEAA professionals. As a first-generation college student herself, she graduated from UC Berkeley with a Bachelor of Arts in Public Health and a minor in Asian American and Asian Diaspora Studies.



Yee Xiong, Associate Consultant, Lam Consulting Group | Yee is a sexual assault survivor and the proud daughter of Hmong political refugees. By speaking out about her experiences, Yee has broken barriers by shining a light on gender-based violence, especially in the Asian American community, and has inspired survivors of all backgrounds across the nation to also speak out and define their own justice. In her current role, she leads all programming to advance AAPIs, LGBTQ, women, and youth in public service, especially those from marginalized communities. The Lam Consulting Group specializes in governmental affairs, organizational development, and nonprofit management. As a student, Yee co-founded Rise Up! Yolo, a coalition of Asian American & Pacific Islander student activists and grassroots organizers addressing the needs of the AAPI communities and across its diaspora. Yee is an alumna of the Asian Pacific Youth Leadership Project and is a graduate of UC Davis with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Asian American Studies.



Nkauj lab Yang, Executive Director, California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs | Nkauj lab Yang is the first-ever Executive Director for CCAPIAA. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Ethnic Studies at the UC Berkeley and pursued her Master of Arts in Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University. Nkauj lab has served the community for over two decades through youth and community organizing and advocating to transform state policies. Through Youth Together, Banteay Srei, Serve The People, and Hmong Innovating Politics (HIP), Nkauj lab created brave spaces for community members to realize their power to impact change. She served as the Director of California with the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center partnering with Southeast Asian serving organizations throughout California to advocate for racial equity. In 2020, she was a co-director with HIP where she developed an infrastructure to organize Southeast Asian youth in Sacramento and Fresno and oversaw HIP's integrated Southeast Asian voter engagement work throughout California.



Jack Yao, Principal Consultant and Founder, SC Strategies | Jack is a Democratic strategist, fundraiser and trainer. In his career, Jack has lead teams that have raised over \$40 million in total. As the Principal Consultant and Founder of SC Strategies, he has helped elect Democrats up and down the ballot all across California, as well as in seven other states. Jack has also developed and led both staff and candidate trainings for organizations such as the National Democratic Training Committee, California Young Democrats, Kentucky Democratic Party, and various county parties. When he's not helping progressives win, Jack can be found in the kitchen, hanging out with his dog Stelly, or watching his beloved Warriors. Jack is a proud first-generation Taiwanese-American.

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

- African Proverb

2022 NAAPPPA LEADERSHIP AWARDS

FORWARD AWARD



Ronald W. Wong

Executive Producer of the Race Epidemic & Founder/CEO of Imprenta Communications

TORCH AWARDS



DIVERSITY | EQUITY | INCLUSION CHAMPIONS



EAST WEST BANK



California State Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon

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