

CPCS Honors Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month - Advancing Leaders Through Collaboration

The month of May is our opportunity to celebrate the people in the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. The moment allows us to pause, reflect and give due respect to the commitment of the AAPI community to our country, demonstrated through achievement, contribution and sacrifice. The theme for this year is “Advancing Leadership Through Collaboration,” a central concern in a community that has given so much to America and the world, yet remains misunderstood, marginalized and haunted by wrongful physical assault, bias and hatred.

In Massachusetts, as of 2022, the AAPI population is estimated to number 462,831 (American Community Survey data) within our Commonwealth population of 6.96 million residents, making Massachusetts home to the 10th largest AAPI community among all states. Members of the AAPI community come from backgrounds including Chinese, Vietnamese, East Indian, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, Pakistani, Korean, Japanese, Filipino and Nepalese people. The cities with the largest AAPI populations include Quincy, Malden, Lowell, Braintree, Cambridge, Newton, Watertown, Waltham, Medford and Woburn. Recent analysis by the Asian Community Fund and Boston Indicators of the numbers and broader data on the AAPI community in Massachusetts make several key points clear:

- AAPI communities in Massachusetts are fast growing and diverse.
- Recent anti-Asian discrimination and violence reflect existing trends and a history of scapegoating during crisis.
- AAPI workers and entrepreneurs have faced many COVID-related challenges.
- Aggregated data masks many disparities and community needs, including poverty and a need for improved language resources.
- AAPI residents are substantially underrepresented in the municipal workforce and state legislature.
- Mobilizing resources within AAPI communities is key to addressing longstanding needs and closing intragroup disparities.

A good consideration of AAPI history in Massachusetts on the theme of advancing leadership through collaboration must include Harry H. Dow, who in 1929 became the first Asian American lawyer in Massachusetts. Harry Dow was the son of Chinese immigrants and while working in their laundry business, recognized the lack of legal knowledge as an impediment which he was determined to overcome. After law school, Mr. Dow served in the military during World War II and the Korean War, worked for the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (where he started as an interpreter during

law school), and was later a private practitioner specializing in immigration law. Harry Dow's career was adversely impacted by charges of collusion on an immigrant smuggling matter, fueled by the second Red Scare and McCarthyism. Harry defended himself against this charge, but ultimately had to close his practice due to the negative effect on his practice.

Mr. Dow dedicated the remainder of his life to volunteerism and advocacy, across lines of race and culture, serving as a pro bono lawyer for the Emergency Tenants Council and Villa Victoria, an historic Boston community development inspired by the Latinx community in Boston. Among organizations where Harry provided guidance and leadership were Greater Boston Legal Services, the South End Community Health Center, Tent City, South End Neighborhood Action Program, Inc. and Central Boston Elder Services, Inc., Casa Myrna Vasquez Shelter for Women, Central Boston Elder Services, and the Boston Council for Elders. Harry also advised groups including the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. In all this work, Harry Dow collaborated with leaders in the Black, Asian, Latinx and White communities and he was fully embraced as a leader, contributor and friend.

In Harry Dow's memory, the Dow Fund was established by members of his family and the Asian American Lawyers Association of Massachusetts (AALAM) to provide resources to ensure access to the legal system for Asian Americans deprived of justice due to barriers such as language, race, culture, poverty, or immigration status.

The lesson of what Harry Dow contributed across his career of contribution makes an important statement on what one person can do for their community, both within a shared identity, but also across race and culture. Mr. Dow's life makes vitally clear the importance of AAPI leadership and the wisdom of including and elevating AAPI people in the struggle for change. Equally important is our need to learn beyond the surface and the myths that mischaracterize this community, and to stand against the wrongful forces that cause this community so much pain. The AAPI community is a tenth of the total Massachusetts population, if it is not already there, and between the rich diversity of this community and all it has to offer, there is so much to embrace and celebrate.

Additional Reading, Video and Event Links

News video – AAPI leaders on their Boston experiences

<https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/where-im-really-from-boston-aapi-leaders-answer-on-their-own-terms/2385557/>

“Building AAPI Power: A Profile of AAPI Communities in Greater Boston,” Asian Community Fund, Boston Indicators, Boston Foundation, 2021

https://www.bostonindicators.org/-/media/indicators/boston-indicators-reports/report-files/acf_reportfinal.pdf?la=en&hash=292DBA432A53B9CF0B12541A96A3CB18EAF09D2E

Harry H. Dow Fund

<https://www.dowfund.org/>

Background Article on AAPI Heritage Month

<https://www.npr.org/2022/05/02/1095812576/aapi-asian-pacific-heritage-month-origin-may-why#:~:text=This%20year's%20theme%3A%20Advancing%20Leaders%20Through%20Collaboration&text=The%20theme%20builds%20on%20the,Leaders%20through%20Purpose%2DDriven%20Service>

2022 White House Proclamation on Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/04/29/a-proclamation-on-asian-american-native-hawaiian-and-pacific-islander-heritage-month-2022/>

Resource and Support Links Relevant to the AAPI Community

<https://emassbig.org/asianand-pacific-heritage-month/>

AAPI Heritage Month Events in Massachusetts

[Pao Arts Center 5th Anniversary Community Celebration](#)

To commemorate five years of Chinatown’s first arts, cultural, and education center, the Pao Arts Center is holding a special celebration at Mary Soo Hoo Park on the Greenway in May. May 14, 1-4 p.m., Mary Soo Hoo Park at the Greenway, Boston. Free. paoartscenter.org/events/2022/5thanniversary

[Confronting Racial Injustices: Rising Asian American Voices](#)

Join the Massachusetts Historical Society for a conversation on the history of violence Asian Americans have been forced to face over the years, as well as the rising voices who are combating the recent increase in hate directed toward the community. The online event will feature prerecorded remarks by Boston Mayor

Michelle Wu and a panel discussion moderated by Massachusetts Superior Court Associate Justice Catherine H. Ham. May 26, 6-7 p.m. Virtual.

Free. masshist.org/events/confronting-racial-injustice-rising-asian-american-voices

[Boston Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival](#)

An annual tradition since 1979, the nation's first dragon boat festival returns to the Charles River for its 43rd year in June. See dragon boat racing teams from across the country come together to compete, plus enjoy a weekend filled with cultural performances by local, national, and international AAPI groups, arts and crafts, and plenty of delicious food. June 12, between JFK Street Bridge and Western Ave. Bridge, Cambridge. Free. bostondragonboat.org

NAACP Sponsored event

<https://www.naaapboston.org/local-events>

Newton Free Library: Asian Americans in Newton: Reflection and Reimagination
<https://newtonculture.org/event/newton-free-library-presents-asian-americans-in-newton-reflection-and-reimagination/>

Lexington

<https://www.lexingtonma.gov/home/news/asian-american-and-pacific-islanders-aapi-heritage-month-celebration>

Lowell

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/paasa/aapiheritage.aspx>

Charlestown

<https://www.bhcc.edu/aapimonth/>

Taunton

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/hands-on-history-week-tickets-255582031737?aff=erellivmlt>

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/musical-performance-legacy-ukulele-ensemble-tickets-301943881277?aff=erellivmlt>

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/dance-revelasian-showcase-tickets-321452873197?aff=erellivmlt>