

# June 2021



*FAPAC-DOI Newsletter*



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## From the president

Dear Chapter Members,

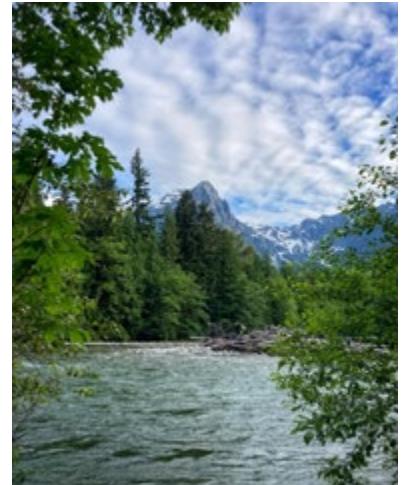
Happy Summer! I can't believe it's already June. Where has the first half of 2021 gone? I recently went on my first summer excursion of 2021 to the Pacific Northwest. It was wonderful to take in the expansive views and watch the river rush by. The days there are very long, especially leading right up to the solstice; I'm sure our friends in Alaska can relate!

As I've mentioned in the past, the great outdoors is where I recharge and restore my energy. How will YOU recharge this summer? I hope you'll share your stories with us.

Stay well,



Lena Chang  
President, FAPAC-DOI



Mount Index and the Skykomish River  
Photo by Lena Chang

# *Leadership spotlight*

## Thomas Liu

Deputy Regional Director

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Pacific Region

I am currently based in Camarillo, California, but I grew up in Cary, North Carolina. I am proud to be a second generation Taiwanese American and to be in a leadership position where I can provide insight, transformational thinking, give back to America, and make Interior a great place to work. Prior to working in the federal government, I received a BS from Stanford and an MBA from Northwestern, and I completed the Senior Executive Fellows program at Harvard's School of Government. I worked in finance and held positions as an investment banking analyst, corporate strategy analyst, product manager, and a hedge fund investment analyst. In 2009, I started my career at DOI as a Presidential Management Fellow and the Chief of Concessions for Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks, then transitioned to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) in 2011 after a brief stint at the White House Council on Environmental Quality. I completed the White House Office of Management & Budget SES Candidate Development Program in 2016.



I initially joined FAPAC-DOI as a founding member when the chapter was created in 2017 to share my experience as an Asian American working at Interior and learn from others. For a few years, I was fairly uninvolved as I had family commitments and being based out of California made it difficult to attend meetings and events. In 2019, however, I became the leadership liaison after understanding how few AAPIs were in leadership positions at Interior and as videoconference capabilities made collaboration from the West Coast easier.

I'm interested in helping FAPAC-DOI thrive as an organization, and serving as a resource to help other AAPIs enter and advance at Interior; yet at the same time, reminding and reinforcing to members that even though we face challenges as AAPI's (as do other minority groups), that the great thing about America is that our decisions and choices still matter more to career success than the circumstances or conditions we are born into.

I also want to continually emphasize that I believe that America's greatest strength comes from the fact that our country is unique in the world as a melting pot and that fundamentally, we are more alike to our fellow Americans than to anyone else in the world. So while FAPAC-DOI is a much needed safe space for us to share and process events, we must not use race to separate us off or wall us off from our fellow Americans.

# *My amazing allies and anchors*

## Barbara Green

Equal Opportunity Manager

National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office

There are times at work I feel as if I am adrift in the ocean in a boat that is rapidly taking on water while dark massive storm clouds are looming over the horizon. The feeling can be overwhelming and suffocating. It can be daunting and I need a safe harbor to anchor my damaged boat. Fortunately, I am blessed with two amazing ports – Becky Shaffer and Michael Groomer. To celebrate and commemorate Pride Month, I chose to honor my two invaluable Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer plus (LGBTQ+) colleagues, who help keep my sanity intact and who are staunch advocates in the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) arena.

Prior to working for the National Park Service (NPS), Interior Region 11 (Alaska), I was an Air Force Equal Opportunity (EO) Director. Most of my career was spent working for the Army, and in 2010, I became an Air Force employee when Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base merged into a joint base (Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson). In 2016, my former Army supervisor, Mark Vaughn, contacted me and said there was an NPS vacancy and he wanted me to fill it.

Although I was not looking for another job, I decided to accept the offer to lateral into my current position to start a new adventure with a different agency, and because I was flattered Mark wanted me to work for him again. Yet, much to my chagrin, Mark retired shortly after he hired me and I felt abandoned since I was essentially on my own adjusting to a new agency. However, everything still worked out since I value and appreciate NPS' mission and I am a true believer in "...everything happens for a reason."

Unlike the Air Force when I had a staff of five EO Specialists, I am an office of one and rely on Becky, whom I do not directly supervise; she is primarily an architect and a collateral duty Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Counselor. I want to thank the universe for compelling her to become a counselor since she is simply amazing and extraordinarily helpful to me.

My first impression of Becky was that she is warm, caring, kind, and clearly dedicated to the NPS mission. She also considered the EEO program to be critical and essential, thus her desire to become a counselor. Becky was instrumental in helping me to better learn and understand the NPS culture, which I sorely needed, since most of my career was spent working for the Department of Defense.

Becky is intelligent, pays attention to detail, cares very much about doing the right thing and writes well, which is a necessary skillset in drafting counselor's reports. Becky is also my trusted confidant and we share things with each other we would not tell anyone else. We also have quite a few hearty laughs when we discuss some of the things we encounter at work. Better to laugh than cry, right?

In the EEO realm, we do not advocate for management and we do not advocate for the employee – we advocate for the process and ensure we handle complaints in a timely and effective manner. Besides being a proficient counselor, Becky is my ally in fostering DEI into the workplace. We have a collaborative partnership and genuinely enjoy working together.

Michael is an EEO Complaints Manager for Interior Regions 3, 4 and 5 (Midwest), and he is my partner-in-crime. I first met Michael at an EEO training session in Nebraska and we immediately clicked. He is the entertaining one and the Tigger to my Eeyore – a testament to how opposites attract. Michael has a clever sense of humor and flawless comedic timing, and I was drawn to him since I love being able to laugh to help temper the solemn side of my personality. And he has such acute insight into human nature, he would make a phenomenal therapist.

When Asian hate crimes were on the forefront, Becky and Michael were there for me. Becky listened to my frustration, my sadness, my fear, and expressed genuine care and concern. Michael called me to ask how I was feeling and listened attentively while I spoke, and I could feel him embracing me with a virtual hug, which was comforting during such a fraught time.



*Photo credit: Cyndi Strawhacker*

Becky and Michael are great shoulders to lean on, and I am always there to listen to them when they share with me the adverse and discriminatory behavior they often contend with. We learn from each other and we advocate for each other. We support each other and we respect each other. We are each other's lifelines and having a lifeline at work helps immeasurably.

During Pride Month, we honor and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community. We also remember the Stonewall Riots, which paved the way for the advocacy of LGBTQ+ rights, and remember the pain and agony of those who fought for what was right against those who were misguidedly blinded by ignorance and hatred.

The EEO career field can be a difficult and challenging one, albeit a rewarding one. Regardless of what type of job we have, all of us experience difficult challenges throughout the course of our federal career, and what helps immensely, is to have an ally...a teammate...a sounding board...a trusted agent...an anchor to keep your boat steady during a turbulent storm.

I am tremendously blessed to have Becky and Michael in my life. I value their work contributions considerably and their character even more. Both of them have experienced being knocked down with sizable force by harassing bullies, and both of them triumphantly got back up and became stronger and never lost their grace and class. Becky and Michael contribute richly to our agency, by virtue of how they conduct themselves at work and in their personal lives.

Although I honor and celebrate Becky and Michael every day, for Pride Month, I wanted to express my appreciation to them in writing. Happy Pride Month, my amazing allies and anchors. Thank you for getting me through those tough days at work. Thank you for being my anchor and helping me to find a safe harbor when I needed one. Most of all, thank you for making the world a better and more inclusive place.



*Andrew Gertge and Sierra Willoughby (back row). Dael Davenport, Brenda Coleman, Kelly Chang, Barbara Green, and Becky Shaffer (front row).*  
*Photo credit: Michael Downs*

# NLTP Q&A

## Janet Cushing

Deputy Chief, National Climate Adaptation Science Center  
U.S. Geological Survey

### **Insights from FAPAC's 2021 National Leadership Training Program (NLTP)**

#### **Was this your first time at NLTP? What made you want to sign up?**

Yes! I signed up because I was curious what NLTP had to offer in terms of leadership training. Also, I had never been to a workshop that was organized by and for those in the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) community, and I was intrigued by the idea of meeting, albeit virtually, with others to discuss issues directly related to AANHPIs.

#### **What are some key takeaways or favorite sessions that you will remember?**

One of the takeaways was from a session led by Vu Pham, in which he spoke of the Japanese concept of “ikigai,” which he said translated to “life’s purpose.” Being half Japanese, I was fascinated by this idea being applied to one’s life. Vu showed a Venn diagram whereby the idea of finding one’s purpose is to find the intersection of the following four ideas: what you love, what you’re good at, what you get paid to do, and what the world needs. This led me to do a little more research on my own, and what I found was not only similar references to the venn diagram described by Vu, but also an article pointing to a 2001 paper by Japanese clinical psychologist and associate professor, Akihiro Hasegawa, who pointed out that the concept of ikigai aligns more to *seikatsu* (every day life) as opposed to *jinsei* (lifetime) and, through his research, Hasegawa discovered that Japanese people believe that the sum of small joys in everyday life results in more fulfilling life as a whole. Either interpretation of ikigai seems like good life lessons to me.

Another favorite session was the one with the panel of major generals talking about various aspects of leadership. I enjoyed hearing about their experiences, and even learning that there were Asian Americans who had advanced to that level in the military.

#### **Would you recommend NLTP to others? Why or why not?**

I would recommend NLTP to others if it was an in-person event. If this event were held virtually, then I might recommend it to those who were in the early part of their careers. For those who are in mid-senior level career positions, I think there might not be as much benefit to attend virtually because many of the leadership skills training might have been taken. The largest benefit really comes in the networking and person-to-person interactions, and those are more easily done at an in-person setting, where one can have ad hoc meetings in reception areas, or other places.

#### **Anything else you'd like to share about NLTP?**

I think there is great potential for NLTP to bring the AANHPI community together to share information, experiences, and provide a venue to dive deeply into issues of particular interest to our community.

# Community highlight

On May 24, 2021, former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Employee, Damon Yeh, wrote an article for the [REI Co-op Journal](#) on creating space for communities in the outdoors:



“For me, rock climbing played a big role in helping me find my identity and my community. I created the @AsianBoulderingCrew Instagram page to enable Asian Americans across the country to see each other and know that there are folx like them with similar ambitions and challenges. I want to encourage them to pursue their passions and achieve their highest potential, whether in climbing or in other pursuits.”

Read the full article here: [Damon Yeh: Limitless Sides to Outside](#)



*Photo credit: Eric Hian-Cheong, @erichc\_photo on Instagram.*

For another relevant read from the REI blog, check out this [Q&A with Interior Secretary Deb Haaland on Monument Designations, Conservation, and More](#) from June 15.

# *Announcements*

## — Join the FAPAC-DOI Board —

The Executive Board consists of the current elected Officers (President and Vice-Presidents), the immediate past President, Leadership Liaison, and Senior Advisors. We currently have an opening for the Vice President of Programs. Please contact [fapacboard@ios.doi.gov](mailto:fapacboard@ios.doi.gov) if you are interested in learning more about the position!

## — CAPAL 2021 Washington Leadership Program —

Registration is live for the Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership (CAPAL) 2021 Washington Leadership Program series. Join them for weekly panels every Wednesday at 6:00-7:30pm EDT from now until July 21. This year's theme is "Reflection and Resiliency," highlighting the ability of communities to come together and catalyze momentous change through these unforeseen times. Through these sessions, panelists and attendees will reflect upon events leading up to 2021, emphasizing how communities unite to reflect and demonstrate unyielding tenacity and resilience, even in the face of uncertain and demanding circumstances.

These sessions are free and open to all. Learn more on the CAPAL [website](#) or RSVP for individual sessions below!

June 30 : Google Knows Me Better Than Me: AANHPI Data & Privacy

July 7 : Environmental Racism & Inequality: How did we get here?

July 14 : What is your Experience with America? Native Hawaiians & Pacific Islanders

July 21 : Our Voice, Our Power: AANHPI Cross-Community Alignment

# Pride resources

**Capital Pride:**  
[AAPI Pride 2021](#)

**Asian Pride Project:**  
[Website | YouTube channel](#)

**Glsen:**  
[The Experiences of LGBTQ Students of Color](#)

**Tagg Magazine:**  
[8 Queer AAPI Women Creators You Should Know](#)

**It Gets Better Project:**  
[Resources for AAPI LGBTQ+ Communities](#)  
[Stories from the LGBTQ+ AAPI community](#)

**The Yappie:**  
[Queer AAPIs and the politics of belonging](#)

**Federal Employee Resource Groups:**  
[FWS Pride Employee Resource Group](#)  
[NPS LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group](#)  
[USGS LGBTQ+ Ally Employee Resource Group](#)

**Disclosure (Netflix documentary)**

# Member resources

## What we're watching

[Kim's Convenience:](#)  
Netflix show about a Korean-Canadian family

[Love, Victor:](#)  
Hulu drama about an LGBTQ+ teen

[Miss Pat Chin Helped Reggae Become a Globally Celebrated Genre](#)

[#AZNxBLM project](#)

## What we're listening to

[Asian Enough podcast](#)

[A Daughter's Journey to Reclaim Her Heritage Language](#)

## What we're reading

[What I Gained From Self-Defense Class in the Wake of Anti-Asian Attacks](#)

[Data Points to Disparities among Asian Americans](#)

## Diversity, equity, and inclusion

[What AAPI Heritage Month Means to Ben's Chili Bowl's Sage Ali](#)

[Remarks by President Biden at Signing of the Juneteenth Act](#)

[Combatting Hate: Key Federal Government Resources](#)

[Deputy National Security Advisor on Supporting the AAPI Community](#)

## Other

[Photography by RKRKRK](#)

[Self-portraits by Immigrant Storyteller Barnali Ghosh](#)