Biography: Los Angeles City Councilmember David E. Ryu represents Los Angeles' 4th Council District, which includes the neighborhoods of Sherman Oaks, Toluca Lake, Hollywood, Hollywood Hills, Los Feliz, Silverlake, Miracle Mile, Hancock Park, Windsor Square, Larchmont and a portion of Koreatown. On July 1st, 2015, Ryu became the first Korean American to serve on the Los Angeles City Council and only the second Asian American elected to the City Council. On January 14th, 2020, Ryu was named Assistant President Pro Tempore of the City Council. He became the first Asian American to serve on City Council leadership. Councilmember Ryu has been a leader on addressing homelessness, supporting working families, standing up to hate crimes, and building a more just and transparent government for all.

Remarks: Thank you to Asian Americans Advancing Justice - LA - Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council - Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance - Organization of Chinese Americans - Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs - Pilipino Workers Center - Empowering Pacific Islander Communities - And everyone who has joined this call and press conference today. We are standing together today in firm support of Proposition 16 - And against California’s so-called “race neutral” policies. These policies - instituted in 1996 - have failed. They have failed Black, Latino and Indigenous Californians. They have failed businesses - workers - AND students of our diverse state - and they have failed Asian Americans - Pacific Islanders - and Native Hawaiians.

WITHOUT affirmative action programs systemic oppression has only grown in education, employment and contracting. The truth is -- when you claim to be “race neutral” or to “not SEE race” you simply validate a status quo that is built on the oppression of people of color. In California - we see race and we celebrate diversity. We recognize the uneven playing field we stand on, and seek to right those wrongs. Just last week - Trump’s Department of Justice came out against affirmative
action threatening Yale University with a lawsuit and claiming that affirmative action discriminates against white and Asian Americans. This is yet another pathetic attempt to drive a wedge between the AAPI community and other communities of color. But we WILL NOT be divided, we WILL NOT serve as your model minority, and we WILL NOT be used to prop up an unfair and unjust system.

Rather than fighting with each other over crumbs, let’s work together to take a bigger slice of the pie. If we want more opportunity - we should build more schools. If we want a fair shot - we must start with a fair system. And if we want our kids to have a brighter future let’s start by fixing the injustices of our past and present. The truth is - affirmative action HELPS Asian Americans - Pacific Islanders - and Native Hawaiians who are still underrepresented in boardrooms and leadership positions. Most of all affirmative action allows us to move forward toward a California of justice and equity for ALL. I urge everyone to vote YES on Proposition 16 and help us build that future. Thank you.

**Manjusha P. Kulkarni**
*Executive Director*
Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON)
mkulkarni@a3pcon.org

**Biography:** Manjusha P. Kulkarni (Manju) is the Executive Director of Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), a coalition of over forty community-based organizations that serve and represent the 1.5 million Asian Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles County. Manju also teaches in the Asian American Studies Department at UCLA. Manju began her career working at the Southern Poverty Law Center and has since worked at several nonprofit organizations serving low-income and immigrant communities and communities of color. In April 2014, Manju received the White House Champions of Change award for her dedication to improving health care access for Asians American communities.

**Remarks:** Good morning. My name is Manjusha Kulkarni and I am Executive Director of Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council, a coalition of over forty community-based organizations that serve and represent the 1.5 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles.

I am here today to urge AAPI voters in California to support Proposition 16. In reversing Prop 209, this initiative will ensure that AAPI women obtain fair access to employment and educational opportunities. Currently, minority and women business enterprises have lost an average of $820 million in state contracts every year as a result of Prop 209. Despite paying taxes that help fund public
contracts, Asian American women are denied equal opportunities to obtain those contacts.

Additionally, Asian American women who work full-time only make 90 cents for every dollar a white man makes per year, which means less money for child care, college tuition, as well as rent and health care. Proposition 16 works to correct these two injustices by preventing government agencies from discriminating against AAPI women or granting preferential treatment to white men. For these reasons, it is critical that we vote on Nov. 3 to ensure the passage of Prop 16.

C.C. Yin
Founder & Chair Emeritus
Asian Pacific Islander Public Affairs Association (APAPA)
ccyin@apapa.org

Biography: C.C. Yin is the Founder and Chair emeritus of APAPA, one of the most influential APIA organizations with 30 chapters nationwide. He is also a successful entrepreneur, together with his wife Regina and family, they own 30 MacDonald's restaurants.

C.C. Yin is an icon in the community. For decades, he has served the Rotary Club, Police Activities League, NAACP, Boys & Girls Club, Chinese Railroad Worker Historical Memorial Monument, "Save Angel Island", and many other national and local organizations. He also served as a Trustee of the California State University, California Lottery Commissioner, and on the California Highway Patrol Advisory Board.

Remarks: I want to speak about affirmative action and small business contracting on a more personal basis. Years ago when I bought my first McDonald’s restaurant, I was not a good candidate to buy a franchise. I was an engineer with zero experience in operating a private business. Long story short, I was the beneficiary of affirmative actions which gave me and my family a chance to work hard, apply ourselves and subsequently become one of the most successful MacDonald franchisees. It would not have happened if it weren't for affirmative action that got us started.

APAPA and many other APIA organizations are currently supporting AB 979, a California bill that would require all corporations with headquarters in California to have underrepresented ethnic groups at the corporate director level. The first draft of AB 979 did not include APIA as an underrepresented group because of the myth that we are successful. This bill has been amended to include Asian Americans as
being underrepresented in addition to African Americans, Latinx groups, and other minority ethnic groups.

Thank you for allowing APAPA this opportunity to express our views on the Bamboo ceiling.

Ken Fong  
*National Chair*  
Asian Pacific Islander Public Affairs Association (APAPA)  
ksfongdna@gmail.com

**Biography:** Kenneth Fong is the current APAPA Chair, and the Founder and Chairman of Kenson Ventures, which provides funding and strategic advice to biotechnology start-ups and companies. Prior to Kenson, he founded Clontech Laboratories in 1984, a molecular biology company that has subsequently merged with Becton Dickinson. Dr. Fong has many philanthropic interests. He was one of the lead supporters of the Tech Museum of Innovation in San Jose, the Chinese Historical Society in San Francisco and many other projects. Today, he nurtures the emerging biotechnology field here and in Asia by serving on nonprofits, university boards and government-sponsored institutes.

**Remarks:** A recent LA Times OpEd stated that “College-educated, US-born Asians fall behind their white counterparts in earnings, and also behind all groups in advancement beyond entry-level professional positions. Recent reports of top technology firms in Silicon Valley shows that Asians are the least likely racial group to be promoted into managerial and executive positions. White men and women are twice as likely as Asian men and women, respectively, to advance into the executive ranks. And while they are the largest minority group in major law firms, Asian Americans have the highest attrition rates and the lowest ratio of partners to associates.”

Affirmative action will allow us to advocate for those leadership roles. With more AAPI and women in state legislative roles, we can make a greater impact on employment. Affirmative action will create access to jobs and small business contracting opportunities. Asian Americans continue to experience inequities in private and government contracting in the industries of construction, architecture, engineering, and technology across the country. Language and cultural differences and lack of access to capital and financial resources are root causes of these barriers.
Wayne Ng  
*President*  
Chinese American Citizens Alliance - Los Angeles  
cacalalodge@gmail.com

**Biography:** Wayne Ng is currently the President of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance - Los Angeles Chapter. Mr. Ng is active in the Los Angeles Chinatown community having served as President of the Eng Family Benevolent Association Los Angeles and as a representative to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association Los Angeles. Mr. Ng is also currently serving as Grand President of the Western United States for the National Eng Family Benevolent Association. Mr. Ng is an attorney at Eng & Nishimura in Los Angeles where he has primarily practiced U.S. immigration and nationality law for 18 years.

**Remarks:** Good morning. My name is Wayne Ng and I am the President of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance Los Angeles chapter based in Los Angeles Chinatown. The Chinese American Citizens Alliance, C.A.C.A., is the oldest Asian American civil rights organization in the U.S. first incorporated in 1895. The Los Angeles chapter was established in 1912. C.A.C.A. was founded by a group of American-born Chinese to fight anti-Chinese discrimination, secure equal rights for Chinese Americans, and to better the welfare of our communities.

Like America, C.A.C.A. is of diverse opinions but we all believe in active American citizenship. For this reason, I am authorized to speak only on behalf of the Los Angeles chapter, and our views, and the stated views of other C.A.C.A. chapters, do not necessarily reflect the opinions and beliefs of all C.A.C.A. members in California or nationally.

With that being said, C.A.C.A. Los Angeles supports passage of California Prop. 16 and the objectives of affirmative action including the use of race/ethnic conscious policies in securing equitable opportunities for the historically disadvantaged and to encourage diversity. We know that affirmative action is an imperfect tool and requires constant adjustment and honing, but we believe that Prop. 209 went too far by banning an otherwise relevant and useful tool.

In the context of college admissions, Prop. 16 will help the AAPI communities by allowing for disaggregation of data related to Asian ethnicities. This will allow for underrepresented Asian ethnicities to be identified to support classroom and campus diversity. Likewise, we stand with other ethnic minorities, including Black Americans and
Latinx Americans, in supporting Prop. 16 to increase representation of these groups in our public universities.

Although hard-earned by Asian Americans, our good position in public education is still a place of privilege. It is good citizenship to help those groups who have been disadvantaged by society to have equitable opportunities. It is honorable to take a step back so we all can take steps forward together. There is already too much selfishness in this country today. Thank you.

Warren Furutani
California State Assemblymember, Former
warrenfurutani@gmail.com

Biography: Warren T. Furutani (born October 16, 1947) is a community activist turned politician who served in the California State Assembly from 2018 to 2012. He is a Democrat and a fourth generation Japanese American. Furutani was elected to the 55th California Assembly District in a special election in 2008. Prior to being elected, he served on the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education and then the Los Angeles Community College District Board of Trustees. He was the first Asian Pacific American ever elected to the LAUSD board in 1987. He served as president of both boards and chair of the California API Legislative Caucus.

Remarks: When I was on the LAUSD Board of Education. A high school principal was describing the challenges she was facing with her diverse student body. She said one day a Korean student, who couldn’t speak English, enrolled in school. Then the next day, a Vietnamese student, who also couldn’t speak English enrolled. I asked what she did and she said she sat them together in class. When I asked why, she responded that at least they’d have someone to talk to.

Actually beyond the model minority stereotype, sometimes it seems AAPI’s are invisible. Like featured speakers at the Democratic National Convention and especially in our schools. If we’re not bound for Cal or Harvard we just fade into the woodwork. Out of sight out of mind.

This is especially true when schools and agencies don’t dis-aggregate data on AAPI’s. Everyone gets lumped together as adjacent white people or become just plan invisible or treated as foreign students.

Affirmative action may help but we need to go beyond such a benign and pathetic goal. We want concrete results, we want programs that are going to develop people to their fullest potential. Acting affirmatively is just the beginning as is repealing Prop 209 in November!
Sefa Aina
Board Chair
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
sefa.aina@pomona.edu

Biography: The 8th of 9 children born to parents from the US (colonial) Territory of American Samoa, Sefa was a first-generation low-income college student raised in Southeast San Diego. Upon graduating from Sweetwater High School, Sefa attended the US Naval Academy on a football scholarship, but ultimately finished college at UCLA. Once at UCLA, Sefa became actively engaged in the struggle to create access to education opportunities for Pacific Islander youth in Inglewood, Carson, Compton and Long Beach. This program today, PIER (Pacific Island Education and Retention), has institutional support from UCLA and has been a constant in the struggle to educate overlooked and underserved Pacific Islander youth for nearly two decades.

Sefa is currently the Associate Dean and Director of the Draper Center for Community Partnerships at Pomona College. Professionally, he has served as an academic and student-organizational advisor, as well as an instructor for Asian American Studies programs at UCLA and California State University, Fullerton. Sefa has taught courses in contemporary Pacific Islander issues, community engagement, and has done countless workshops and talks at colleges and universities throughout the country.

In the community, Sefa is a founding member and current Board Chair of EPIC (Empowering Pacific Islander Communities) and has been active on the advisory boards of the PIHCP (Pacific Islander Health Careers PIPELINE) Project, NHPI (Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander) Alliance for Health, Pacific Islander Cancer Control Network (PICCN) Samoan Community Advisory Board, and The AIGA (All Islands Getting Along) Foundation. Sefa is also a founding member of NPIEN (National Pacific Islander Educators Network) and the UCLA PIER Project.

In September of 2010, Sefa was appointed by President Obama to the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Sefa served as the Vice-Chair of the Commission from 2010 - 2014. He has also been a Reader for the APIASF (Asian Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund), and AIGCS (American Indian Graduate Center Scholars) Gates Millennium Scholarship. Through his work on college campuses and in the larger community, Sefa has demonstrated his commitment to increasing the support and opportunities for non-traditional, marginalized, first generation students.
Remarks: Language access and cultural competency has a huge impact on what communities get access to healthcare and other public services. Affirmative action will help us address gaps in these areas by allowing these systems to look at race/ethnicity (which is tied to language and cultural competency) in their hiring to better represent/serve our diverse communities. Reports have shown that South Asian and Pacific Islander communities are both being infected and dying at higher rates from COVID-19.

But we have to also think about future pandemics and future times of crisis, especially when the American people lack a coherent response to national emergencies. We have to think about our pipelines of future doctors and epidemiologists who can fill the roles being filled now with concerned PI leaders who aren’t specifically in the medical field but have no other choice but to respond to the crisis. Affirmative action will help to put in place a better pipeline for young Pacific Islanders and for that matter all marginalized communities, better lead their families and their communities through future pandemics.

**Albert Lu**  
*Board President*  
OCA Greater LA: Asian American Pacific Advocates  
[albertlu@oca-gla.org](mailto:albertlu@oca-gla.org)

**Biography:** Albert Lu serves as the President for the Board of Directors of OCA - Greater Los Angeles, a chapter of OCA Asian Pacific American Advocates that is dedicated to advancing the social, political, and economic well-being of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the US.

Remarks: Hi everyone, my name is Albert Lu, Board President of OCA-Greater Los Angeles. Founded in 1991 as a local chapter of OCA National. We are dedicated to advancing the social, political, and economic well-being of Asian Pacific Americans in the United States.

Growing up in East Los Angeles, my family was one of very few Chinese American families in a mostly Latino neighborhood. Despite how different our languages are and how different our cultures were, I reflect back on how so many people looked out for us despite being so different. We admire and celebrate each other’s cultures here in the United States, especially here in LA. My parents worked alongside many Mexican Americans who like them came here for better opportunities and we can’t forget that we are very much in this together.
So to see this false narrative that Prop 16/Affirmative Action would pit them against us is hurtful.

The fact is Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders absolutely do benefit from considerations of race. Last year’s ruling in the Harvard admissions case, the judge specifically stated: “Removing considerations of race and ethnicity from Harvard’s admissions process entirely would deprive applicants, including Asian American applicants, of their right to advocate the value of their unique background, heritage, and perspective and would likely also deprive Harvard of exceptional students who would be less likely to be admitted without a comprehensive understanding of their background.” Using Harvard as an example, their consideration of race results in admissions with over 20% AAPI and we are only 6% of the population. Affirmative action will INCREASE college admissions for our students.

Aquilina Soriano Versoza
Executive Director
Pilipino Workers Center (PWC)
aqui@pwsc.org
(213) 422-3341

Biography: Aquilina Soriano Versoza is Executive Director of the Pilipino Workers Center of Southern California, a nonprofit serving and organizing Pilipino immigrant workers in Los Angeles. Aquilina is also serving as the current President of the Board of Directors of the National Domestic Workers Alliance. She was the recipient of the 2018 Frederick Douglass 200 Abolitionist award. She studied her BA in Asian American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Remarks: My name is Aquilina Soriano Versoza and I am the Executive Director of the Pilipino Workers Center of Southern California, with a membership base of Filipino workers including caregivers, teachers and other essential workers. Affirmative Action is important to address structural inequalities and discrimination faced by Asian Americans in the workplace. These inequalities show themselves as lower wages and a bamboo ceiling that Asian Americans hit when being considered for leadership positions. College-educated, US-born Asians fall behind their white counterparts in earnings, and also behind all groups in advancement beyond entry-level professional positions. Also, recent reports of top technology firms in Silicon Valley show that Asians are the least likely racial group to be promoted into managerial and executive positions. White men and women are twice as likely as Asian men and women, respectively, to advance into the executive ranks. Affirmative Action will help to begin to close the income inequalities and give Asian Americans a fairer chance of career.
advancement by acknowledging and bringing into consideration the real racial inequalities that exist in America.

Mahnoor Hussain  
Policy and Partnerships Manager  
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)  
mahnoor@saalt.org  
(301) 270-1855

Biography: Mahnoor Hussain is the Policy & Partnerships Manager at SAALT. She advocates for just and equitable policies by centering the voices of South Asian immigrants and communities of color. Previously, she worked at the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) and APIAVote. She is currently an organizing fellow with Justice for Muslim’s Collective supporting with racial justice and civic engagement campaigns for Muslims in the DMV region. Mahnoor is a first-generation immigrant and graduated from American University’s School of International Service. You can find her tweeting about books and decolonial memes @mahnoorhk.

Remarks: Affirmative action was an initiative designed to address centuries of intentional institutionalized exclusion that Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities endured in the United States. Today, racial inequality continues to stratify communities of color: the COVID-19 pandemic has only reinforced longstanding inequities in our social, political and economic structures and the data shows that Black, Latinx, and indigenous communities have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The recent Black Lives Matter uprisings also demonstrate that institutionalized racism is not a distant memory but an ongoing, violent, and lived reality for Black communities.

Academic institutions are no different. Admissions criteria, standardized testing, and access to funding function to favor wealthier and white students. The notion that affirmative action actively hurts South Asian Americans only serves to further entrench the model minority myth, that our communities are inherently more deserving or meritorious than Black, Latinx and Indigenous communities. It also erases the disparities within our own communities, ignoring working class, caste oppressed, religious minorities within our population who can gain greater access to academic institutions through effective affirmative action policies.

For South Asians, admissions factors that consider race, class, and caste are critical in not only ensuring diverse learning environments, which ultimately benefit all students, but as an important remedy to the centuries of discriminatory social mores and federal policies, including national origin based immigration policies that have hindered certain
Asian American immigration while favoring others. We must stop allowing affirmative action to be criminalized - to do so is anti-Black, anti-immigrant, and undermines equity.

Aidan Arasasingham  
External Vice President  
UCLA and UCSA Government Relations  
usaevp@asucla.ucla.edu  
(949) 466-7685

Biography: Aidan Arasasingham is the External Vice President of the UCLA Undergraduate Students Association and leads the statewide UC Student Association, the official voice of the over 285,000 UC students at the university, state, and federal levels. He is especially focused on advancing pro-student affordability, accessibility, and equity policies that support UC’s most marginalized student populations. He also serves and has served on the boards of the Associated Students UCLA (ASUCLA), Westside Young Democrats Club, and the Irvine Unified School District (IUSD). He is a senior at UCLA majoring in Global Studies with minors in Urban & Regional Studies and Art History.

Remarks: Good morning, my name is Aidan Arasasingham and I am a rising senior at UCLA. I am the Vice President of our UCLA student body, and I lead the statewide University of California Student Association.

The UC Student Association is the official voice of the over 285,000 students from across the UC’s campuses. Founded during the historic Student Movements of the late 1960s, since 1971 we have been fighting for a more accessible, affordable, and equitable education for students across the UC and state.

Fifty years ago, students were on the frontlines fighting for peace, free speech, and civil rights in a movement that reshaped our nation. Twenty five years ago, students were on the frontlines fighting back against propositions aimed at dividing our state and our campuses. And today, students are once again on the frontlines of the battle for equal opportunity in our generation: the fight for Proposition 16.

It was UC students who worked with Assemblywoman Weber to introduce the precursor to Proposition 16, ACA 5. Why? Because for 25 years, UC students have seen diversity and equal opportunity on our campuses erode year after year. At my own campus of UCLA, the fact that Black students make up less than 3% of students and Indigenous and Pacific Islanders students make up less than 1% of students is a shame on our institution. This wasn’t always the case, and it’s because
we don’t have opportunity for all policies in California that we’re in this place.

On my own campus, the devastating legacy of Prop. 209 continues to be true as the admission rate of Asian Americans has dropped by more than half at UCLA since the passage of Prop. 209. This decline has been especially felt by subpopulations of Asian American and Pacific Islanders students, where the enrollment of Hmong, Bangladeshi, Filipino, Thai, Cambodian, Indonesian, Pakistani, Vietnamese, Korean, and my own Sri Lankan community continues to lag at UCLA and across UC.

Diversity is a vital part of the student experience, and I’m grateful for the number of friends, colleagues, classmates, and partners I have from different communities and backgrounds at UCLA. But I also think about all the incredible friends, colleagues, classmates, and partners who I will never meet at UCLA because we lack opportunity for all in California.

I think about the incredible leaders that UC inspired, educated, and shaped for California and the world a generation ago — leaders in our community whose children lack the same opportunities they had. For all the sacrifices my parents made, I am frustrated that it feels like we’ve gone backwards. My generation does not have the same opportunities and policies that our parents’ generation did, all because of misguided policies set by an electorate of 25 years ago. This frustration that we have less opportunity for all today than we had a generation ago is shared by so many students and voters of my generation. And we’re ready to change that. Asian American and Pacific Islander students, along with our classmates and allies in the Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities, are proud to help lead the charge for Prop 16.

Since the beginning, Asian American and Pacific Islanders students have been on the frontlines of this fight. So to me, it’s laughable that opponents of Prop. 16 falsely claim that it will be bad for Asian American students.

Ask us. Ask Asian American student leaders. We could not be more in support of Prop. 16. I have been awed by the level of support I have seen for affirmative action among Asian American youth on social media, sharing their excitement for Prop. 16 virally through networks across the state. On my campus of UCLA, I have been inspired by the UCLA Asian Pacific Coalition — a student organization that represents over a dozen Asian American, Desi, and Pacific Islander student communities at UCLA — mobilizing as one of the leading voices in support of Prop 16.
Across UC, I have seen both old and new networks of grassroots organizing among Asian American and Pacific Islander student leaders and student unions energized behind Prop. 16. I am proud to be an Asian American, the product of my Sri Lankan community in the United States and abroad, grateful to the love and support of my parents and family. Their story is the story of so many in our community — leaving our homeland to cross oceans, working hard to make this country home, all in the hope that one day I could have a better life here than the ones they left behind. Yet, to the institutions of this state, these rich experiences, struggles, and stories of our community don’t matter. They are blind to them. Proposition 16 will peel away the institutional blindness in our society, to finally allow for the needs of communities throughout California to finally be seen and acknowledged.

I’m honored today to be among such giants and role models in our community, fighting for the needs of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in government, healthcare, education, and industry. And as the next generation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, we as students are in solidarity with the leaders around me, ready as a new electorate to vote Yes on Prop. 16 — to guarantee Opportunity for All in the future we will be graduating into and building our lives.

Thank you.

Ash Kalra
California State Assemblymember
27th Assembly District
Roseryn Bhudsabourg, Communications Director, 
Roseryn.Bhudsabourg@asm.ca.gov

Biography: Assemblymember Ash Kalra was first elected to the California Legislature in 2016, representing the 27th District, which encompasses approximately half of San Jose and includes all of downtown. In 2018, he was re-elected to his second term. Assemblymember Kalra is the Chair of the State Assembly Labor & Employment Committee. He previously served as Chair of the Aging & Long-Term Care Committee and continues to serve as a Committee Member, as well as serving on the Judiciary, Education, and Water, Parks & Wildlife Committees. Assemblymember Kalra has established himself as a leader on issues ranging from criminal justice reform to the environment, as well as health care sustainability, housing affordability, growing our transportation infrastructure, and expanding economic opportunity to all Californians. Assemblymember Kalra previously served as a San José City Councilmember for eight years and was a deputy public defender in Santa Clara County for 11 years prior to the
City Council. He is the first Indian-American to serve in the California Legislature in state history.

Remarks: In closing, we want to make facts presented here today very clear because we need Californians to vote YES ON PROP 16 in November.

Affirmative action has been and is important in opening job opportunities for AAPIs.

Universities that practice affirmative action see greater increases in Asian American admission rates than the UCs, where affirmative action is banned.

Colleges and universities CANNOT and WILL NOT use racial quotas to fill their classes and achieve diversity.

Asian Americans DO NOT HAVE TO SCORE HIGHER than other groups to be admitted into elite college.

Asian American population has grown and so has the enrollment rate at elite colleges that DO CONSIDER RACE.

Standardized test scores are unfair and weak measures of merit and college potential.

We recognize this is a hard conversation to have but an important one because ultimately, all AAPI’s want the same thing-- the very best for our families, friends...our children. Not everyone will agree about how to provide that but we have to work together because the playing field must be leveled for all AAPIs and Black Americans and Latinos-- now and in future generations. We stand in solidarity with our minority brothers and sisters. We know that national opinion surveys show a solid majority of AAPIs support affirmative action. We know that countless Californians do, too. And for those who remain on the fence, we hope today has helped clarify why we believe it’s important. Vote YES ON PROP 16 in November.
Connie Chung Joe  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles  
communications@advancingjustice-la.org

**Biography:** Connie Chung Joe, JD, is the Chief Executive Officer of Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles (Advancing Justice-LA), the nation’s largest legal and civil rights organization for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders. Prior to joining Advancing Justice-LA in August 2020, Connie served as the Executive Director of the Korean American Family Services (KFAM) for 11 years. Under Connie’s leadership, KFAM nearly quadrupled its budget and staff, with culturally and linguistically responsive services to immigrant families, particularly those struggling with mental health, domestic/family violence, and acculturation stresses. Prior to joining KFAM, Connie was a public interest lawyer for seven years. She worked at the Housing Rights Center in LA representing clients in fair housing cases and the American Civil Liberties Union in Chicago working on immigrant’s rights, reproductive rights, post-9/11 racial profiling, police accountability and First Amendment cases. Connie received her BA in Spanish and International Relations from USC and her JD from Georgetown University Law Center.

Connie is active in advocating for and addressing the needs of API communities. She served for 3 years as the Vice-Chair of Planning of the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), a consortium of 40+ API-serving organizations throughout LA County. Connie was also the co-chair of A3PCON’s Mental Health Subcommittee. She served as the co-chair for 2 years of the API Domestic Violence Task Force of LA County and co-founded the API Human Trafficking Task Force of LA County. She has served as co-chair and steering committee member of the CA Culturally Responsive Domestic Violence Network, which consists of culturally-specific DV organizations across the state working to improve DV services for the most vulnerable communities in CA. Connie has been honored for her work by the Asian Pacific Women’s Center and Asian American Drug Abuse Program. CA has testified on several occasions before the CA State Assembly on Domestic Violence to advocate for the needs of immigrants, APIs, and other vulnerable populations in the State. In 2016, she was appointed by CA Senate President Pro Tempore Kevin de Leon to the Domestic Violence Advisory Council. In 2017, Connie was named by CA Assemblymember Sebastian Ridley-Thomas and LA County Board of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas a 40 Under 40 Emerging Civic Leader.
Remarks: We see how affirmative action is again under attack again by the current Administration with the US DOJ alleging last week that Yale's admission process unfairly used race to disadvantage Asian American and white applicants. Asian Americans are being pitted against other communities of color, which has been a historical practice to drive a wedge between us. The model minority myth has continuously harmed our community by creating a false narrative that our children/students are natural high achievers, are not in need of resource, support or face inequities. This myth has also been used to then shame and discredit the struggles Black and Latinx communities face. AAPI’s do need affirmative action and we stand in solidarity with the needs of our brothers, sisters and siblings of color. Affirmative action sends a clear message that our identities are part of who we are and what we bring to the table. Now, during this critical time when our country is having important conversations around systemic racism, we need to show strong allyship by working in coalition with other communities of color. Affirmative action lifts everyone up together and gives all POC better access to education and opportunities.

Thank you to our speakers for taking the time to speak about this incredibly important and timely topic. Thank you to our elected officials State Assemblymember Ash Kalra, State Assemblymember Todd Gloria, and LA Councilmember David Ryu who not only joined us to today to Express Support for Prop 16, but are working tirelessly in the Capital or City Hall to advocate for the needs of AANHPIs and communities of color. We need more AANHPI trailblazers like you representing us in government.

Thank you to our speakers, who are experts from our AANHPI community, who have shared their expertise with us today - Manju Kulkarni from A3PCON; CC Yu and Ken Fong from APAPA; Warren Furutani former CA Assemblymember; Albert Lu from OCA - Greater LA; Aqui Soriano Versoza from PWC; Mahnoor Hussain from SAALT; and Aiden Arasasingha from UCLA & UC Student Assoc. Thank you to these incredibly valuable AANHPI leaders giving your time to support us in this important effort around Affirmative Action.

Thank you to our press for joining us today. If you have any questions for any of our speakers, you can follow up with them directly after this briefing is over. After this briefing, we will email you a contact sheet that will include all of the speakers, their bios, their contact info, and remarks so you can follow up with them directly.

Finally, I just want to thank my team here at AJ-LA for their incredible work, not only to pull off today's press conference, but their ongoing efforts to fight for education equity in CA. As many of you know, I just took on this position as CEO of AJ-LA earlier this month, but our staff
have been fighting the good fight for many years, using both litigation and policy work, to champion education reform for our communities of color.