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## Orinda city council joins school board in honoring Asian and Pacific Island Americans in May

By Sora O'Doherty



Photo provided

In the shadow of increasing hate crimes against Asian Americans since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Orinda City Council and the board of the Orinda Union School District joined together to proclaim May as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. The proclamation also condemned discrimination and violence toward individuals of Asian descent.

The proclamation acknowledged Asian American and Pacific Islander history, culture, and achievements and recognized "the troubling history of discrimination towards individuals of Asian descent since California's earliest days, as well as the dramatic increase in the violent and hateful crimes and incidents targeting AAPI communities during the COVID-19 pandemic," while also expressing deep concern.

The joint proclamation committed both the city council and the school board to not tolerating and condemning discrimination and continued acts of violence and hate as well as

affirming the values of inclusiveness, humanity, and respect. "We honor AAPI individuals and stand in solidarity with the AAPI community as we work to dismantle systemic racism," the document proclaims.

AAPI heritage month was originated with a congressional bill in June 1977 and President Joseph Biden issued a Presidential Proclamation declaring May as AAPI Heritage month.

Nick Waranoff in public comments said that while he admires the contributions of the AAPI community and particularly deplores the rise in anti-Asian hate crime that seems to have coincided with the pandemic, he felt that recognizing only a few groups causes others to feel hurt and left out, "as I do." In responding to his particular concerns about the rise of antisemitism, Mayor Amy Worth explained that she had recently joined over 600 mayors across the United States who signed onto a statement deploring antisemitism at a recent joint meeting of the American Jewish Committee and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Another public speaker, Cathy Finch, congratulated the city council on its action. "I think that it is wonderful that Orinda is trying to become as inclusive as possible," she said. Council Member Inga Miller said, "Our hearts go out to everybody who was affected," and declared that it was a wonderful time to come together and show support.

Council Member Darlene Gee said that she appreciated the opportunity for herself and the mayor to work together with the school district. "Many of us have or have had children in the school district," she said, and "we have a very significant population of AAPI students." On a personal note, she added, "I am part of a very large and boisterous AAPI family with a lot of family history. I really appreciate this." In moving approval of the proclamation, Vice Mayor Dennis Fay noted that he has a Jewish wife and is the father-in-law of an Asian woman. Seconded by Gee, the measure passed unanimously.

On May 20, President Biden signed into law the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act intended to combat the dramatic increase in hate crimes and violence against Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders. The bill passed the United States Senate with a bi-partisan vote of 94-1, with 5 members not voting. In his remarks before signing the bill, Biden said, "Hate can be given no safe harbor in America."

The Contra Costa County public library is celebrating AAPI months with a reading list celebrating Pacific Islander voices and cultures:

[https://ccclib.bibliocommons.com/list/share/1574600649\\_cccl\\_ed/1889256170\\_celebrating\\_pacific\\_islander\\_voices\\_amp\\_cultures?\\_ga=2.145900669.81879060.1621458263-1877293432.1621458263](https://ccclib.bibliocommons.com/list/share/1574600649_cccl_ed/1889256170_celebrating_pacific_islander_voices_amp_cultures?_ga=2.145900669.81879060.1621458263-1877293432.1621458263)

islander\_voices\_amp\_cultures?\_ga=2.145900669.81879060.1621458263-1877293432.1621458263

Other library resources for AAPI month can be located at <https://ccclib.org/blogs/post/celebrating-asian-pacific-american-heritage-month/>

Reach the reporter at: [sora@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sora@lamorindaweekly.com)

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