

Securing a Seat at the Table for the Asian American Scholar Community



AASF

Asian American
Scholar Forum

2022-23 ANNUAL
IMPACT REPORT

“

*DON'T JUST GET INVOLVED.
FIGHT FOR YOUR SEAT AT
THE TABLE. BETTER YET,
FIGHT FOR A SEAT AT THE
HEAD OF THE TABLE.*

”

President Barack Obama

“

*“IF YOU DON'T HAVE A
SEAT AT THE TABLE,
YOU'RE ON THE MENU.”*

”

Senator Tammy Duckworth

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BUILDING UP FROM OUR BEGINNINGS



AASF is a 501(c)(3)
nonprofit organization
promoting academic
belonging, openness,
freedom, and equality for
all.



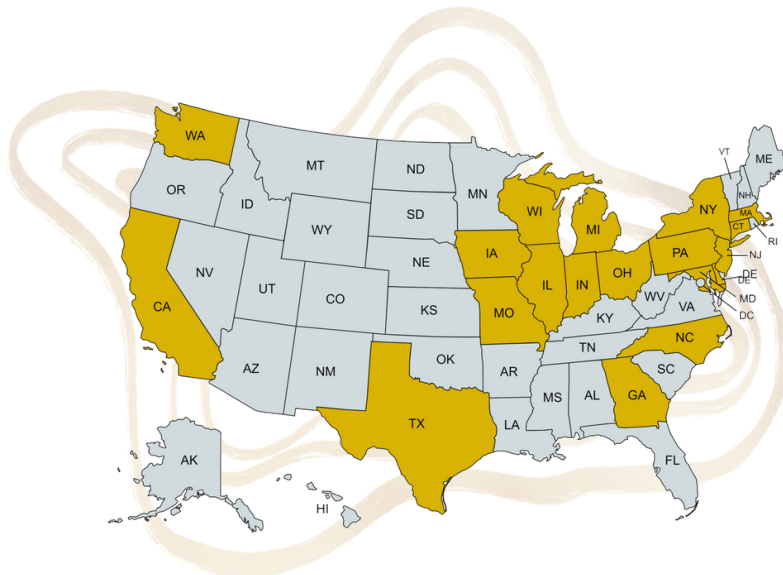
The AASF is guided by its commitment to the following values:

- Embracing inclusivity, diversity, belonging and equality
- Promoting academic freedom, open science, and a healthy intellectual environment
- Advocating justice and fairness
- Empowering truth-seeking, communication, and mutual understanding
- Advancing the public good to humanity

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AASF Member Distribution



A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDING PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is with joy that we present to you the first official annual report of the Asian American Scholar Forum. As a newly established nonprofit organization, we proudly represent a community of Asian Americans and scholars who are united to promote academic belonging, openness, freedom, and equality for all. Our transition to a registered nonprofit organization in 2022, now led by AASF's first Executive Director, Gisela P. Kusakawa, has brought us significant growth and progress in the past year.

As the first national nonprofit for the Asian American scholar community, we brought the unique perspective, expertise, and concerns of Asian American and immigrant scholars directly to courtrooms, newsrooms, universities, federal agencies, the halls of Congress, and the White House in 2022 and the first half of 2023. We spearheaded high level meetings with the White House and federal agencies, including most recently with the Under Secretary Jose W. Fernandez to discuss issues of importance to Asian Americans and scholars. We have convened dialogue between high level officials in the Biden administration and university leadership, and acted as a resource and expert for Congress and federal agencies by conducting educational meetings and briefings for members of Congress and their staff.

AASF has quickly become a trusted expert for the federal government, universities, museums, media, civil rights organizations, and the general public. Earlier this year, AASF was voted in as one of the newest members of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA), which is a coalition of the oldest and most influential Asian American civil rights groups in the country. Through these partnerships and more, we have filled an existing gap among nonprofits, and grown to be a crucial convener, expert, resource, and coalition builder on issues as it relates to the Asian American and scholar community.

Much of our growing leadership is due to advancing our education work—our most crucial and long-lasting goal as a nonprofit—which consists of data and research that inform cutting edge legal and policy changes in the United States. In 2022, we proudly released our latest report, “[Caught in the Crossfire: Fears of Chinese-American Scientists](#),” which was authored by our very own AASF members and [published](#) by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS). The data revealed a growing number of Chinese-descent scientists that have left or are considering leaving the U.S. and avoiding federal grant applications. The [Wall Street Journal](#) and other prominent media outlets reported the findings, highlighting the chilling effect caused by the “China Initiative” and the significant loss of Asian American and immigrant talent in U.S. science and technology. We continue to gather data on border stops of Asian Americans and scholars, as well as explore future research that will better inform public leaders, media, and the general public.

Through education and research, we were able to effectively succeed in having the Department of Justice announce the end of the “China Initiative,” and support seminal legal cases of Dr. Gang Chen, Dr. Xiaoxing Xi, and Dr. Anming Hu, which have greatly contributed to national level change. We were also successful in helping to prevent the inclusion of harmful provisions in must-pass legislation and administrative policies. We are grateful that Congress and the Department of Justice took into consideration the concerns of the Asian American scholar community, and we will continue to lift our collective voice against discrimination and in support of open, collaborative academic and scientific environments. We have worked hard to demonstrate that data and research can be used to create effective change, supported by our shared interests in advancing American values and U.S. leadership in science and technology.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDING PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We have established key partnerships to ensure that the next generation knows Asian American history of scholar excellence, issues, and contributions to the United States. In May 2023 during Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month, we launched the “Pioneer Project” to educate the public on the history of Asian American pioneers who have contributed to our country and the world. We kicked off this crucial project by partnering with the U.S. National Science Foundation on our first video series lifting up Asian American inventors who have significantly impacted our everyday lives. Moving forward, we will be partnering with museums on the distribution of these videos and educational efforts, including the Chinese American Museum in Washington, DC and the Friends of the National Asian Pacific American Smithsonian Museum.

Our educational efforts have not only been limited to scholar innovations, but in ensuring the next generation of legal professionals understands the issues and experiences of Asian American scholars. We established and continue to foster a partnership with NYU Law’s US-Asia Law Institute (USALI) to further legal research on how and why Asian American scientists, academics, and scholars are being targeted. We are working towards a pilot law course to be co-taught by Seton Hall Professor Margaret Lewis and our Executive Director, Gisela P. Kusakawa, who is also a barred attorney. AASF is working with law schools and other institutions to include into their legal curriculum the seminal cases of Chinese American scientists.

Our community boasts some of the most distinguished scholars in their fields, yet Asian American scholars remain largely invisible in American history and are thinly represented in leadership positions. We seek to address this glaring imbalance by uplifting our community’s research and experiences, and ensuring that we are in the room with public officials that make the decisions that impact us and all communities. We are committed to bridging the scholar community with policymakers, legal professionals, and civil rights organizations, and are bringing forward a new era of leadership and collaboration that will create lasting change and establish a national voice for Asian Americans and scholars for decades to come.

We continue to move forward the vision of our founders that there be a seat at the table for the Asian American and scholar community, and to ensure that this space is to the benefit not only for our communities, but for our country as a whole. As AASF grows, we will continue to create opportunities to educate policymakers, media, and the general public while empowering leaders among our growing community. It is only with your support that we will be able to continue to promote open science, pursue justice for our community, and advance the leadership of Asian Americans and scholars—and for that we are extremely grateful.

Thank you,



Yasheng Huang
President



Kai Li
Vice President



Gisela Kusakawa
Executive Director



IMPACT AT A GLANCE

AASF is proud to highlight several notable achievements in 2022-23:

- **Met with high-level officials within the White House and federal agencies**, including with the Under Secretary of the State Department in Washington, DC, and convened dialogue between university leadership and high level officials in federal agencies.
- **Launched the “Pioneer Project,”** starting with a collaboration with the U.S. National Science Foundation to lift up the contributions of Asian American scholar pioneers, which reached over 18,000 views during the announcement.
- **Was voted in as a member of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans**, a coalition of the oldest and most influential Asian American non-profits, increasing our credibility as an organization.
- Co-hosted over **17 webinars** with over **35,000 views** to educate the community on topics ranging from individual civil rights to the implications of federal policies.
- Successfully advocated with the Biden administration for **the end of the Justice Department’s “China Initiative”** and prevented the inclusion of harmful provisions in must-pass legislation and administrative policies.
- Successfully supported **Professors Gang Chen, Xiaoxing Xi, and Anming Hu** in their legal cases, which were of nationwide importance.
- Earned **17 notable media hits in 2022, and 17 in just the first half of 2023**—including an exclusive in the Wall Street Journal; mentions in the New York Times, Inside Higher Ed, The Chronicle , Nature , and the Washington Times; and publishing an article in Science and an op-ed in Teen Vogue—and **26 press releases** published over the course of 2022-23.
- **Published “Caught in the Crossfire: Fears of Chinese-American Scientists” report**, which was authored by our very own AASF members and published by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS). The data showed a growing number of Chinese-descent scientists leaving the U.S. and avoiding federal grant application out of fear of being targeted.

1 Karin Fischer, Latitudes: For Chinese American Scientists, a Chill at the U.S. Border, The Chronicle of Higher Education (Mar. 1, 2023), <https://www.chronicle.com/newsletter/latitudes/2023-03-01>.

2 Natasha Gilbert, China Initiative’s Shadow Looms Large for US Scientists, Nature (Feb. 24, 2023), <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00543-x>.

3 Yu Xie, Xihong Lin, Ju Li, Qian He, Junming Huang, Caught in the Crossfire: Fears of Chinese-American Scientists, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, in press (2023).

AASF'S ORIGINS & SECURING A SEAT AT THE TABLE

By: Founders Kai Li, Zhigang Suo, Xihong Lin, and Xiaodong Zhang

For many within the Asian American scholar community, we have stayed away from civic engagement and having an active voice in Washington, DC—until injustice came knocking at our doors. On January 14, 2021, our colleague Dr. Gang Chen, a widely respected mechanical engineering professor and nanotechnologist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), had his home raided and was arrested by FBI agents on false allegations of federal grant fraud.

This life-altering event came just one year after he was detained and interrogated upon landing at a US airport. In the days after, scholars across the country came to his support under the mantra “We Are All Gang Chen.” Ultimately, we were on the right side of history. We persisted in our efforts to stand by Dr. Chen, and in January 2022, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) ruled to dismiss all criminal charges against Professor Chen—but the damage had already been done.

We learned a terrible but significant lesson. As retired Army National Guard lieutenant colonel and Asian American Senator Ladda Tammy Duckworth once said,

“ [I]f you don't have a seat at the table, you're on the menu - you don't want to be on the menu. ”

The Asian American scholar community reached an awakening. We came to recognize the need for collective action and education—that a consistent, organized national voice was required to speak up on cases such as Dr. Chen's and to ensure that the Asian American scholar community has a seat at the table. We came to see how important our role as Asian Americans and scholars were to ensuring that our country lives up to its American values.

In such circumstances, the idea emerged to establish a new organization known today as the Asian American Scholar Forum (AASF) with the mission of promoting the principles of academic belonging, openness, freedom, and equality for all. We and thirteen other prominent Asian American scholars across multiple disciplines and institutions came together to start the organization, officially becoming a nonprofit organization in May 2022.

In AASF's earliest days, we met for countless hours and together envisioned a permanent non-profit that would educate key decision makers and the general public on Asian American history and issues; build lasting partnerships with the federal government, media, and civil rights organizations; and develop the leaders of tomorrow that would help foster AASF's values for a better future together for decades to come.



We thank our founders, pictured here from top left to bottom right: Drs. Chuan He, Ju Li, Kai Li, Xiaodong Zhang, Xihong Lin, Xiao-Gang Wen, Yang Shao-Horn, Yasheng Huang, Yiguang Ju, Yi Cui, Yu Xie, Yuanyuan Zhou, Zhenan Bao, Zhigang Suo, and Zhihong Jeff Xia



AASF's First Annual & Strategic Planning Convening

We saw that Dr. Gang Chen's experience and that of many Chinese Americans did not happen in isolation. Instead, it was part of a long American history of treating Asian Americans and immigrants as perpetual foreigners and an increasing wave of anti-Asian hate and sentiment that our country was experiencing. We sought to make lasting change by building a system to educate the public on Asian American history—particularly the invisible history of Asian American scholar contributions—and work towards creating a more welcoming environment for Asian Americans and scholars to thrive.

We are happy to see our initial vision come to fruition as AASF grows and works towards the public good. AASF went on to elect Dr. Chen as a board member and welcomed its first Executive Director, Gisela P. Kusakawa, to lead the organization in elevating the credibility of AASF and bridging the scholar community with policymakers, legal professionals, and well-established non-profits in the United States.

As AASF continues to grow its membership and impact in support of Asian American scholars, we see now more than ever the importance of having scientific environments that foster trust, openness, and international collaboration. The United States and the global scientific community are able to be at their best when Asian Americans and immigrants can contribute without fear of discrimination or anti-Asian hate. When our country makes room to welcome and protect scholars of all backgrounds, we all benefit from the excellence and innovation they bring.

We recognize the importance of our permanent voice and presence in civic engagement and national-level dialogue. AASF is committed to promoting greater diversity and ensuring that the Asian American scholar community has a voice. While many scholars may not have expected to have to rise to this calling, we now recognize our crucial role in ensuring a better future for our community, our country, and our democracy.

We have already seen how we can make an impact. Our collective advocacy following Dr. Chen's prosecution helped to bring about the DOJ's announcement to end the China Initiative—and there are many more opportunities to lift up Asian American scholar excellence and leadership in our country. By coming together as AASF, we will continue to serve as a powerful voice to lift up Asian American leaders, advocate for civil rights, educate communities and institutions, and ensure academic belonging, openness, freedom, and equality for all. We are stronger together.





AASF MEMBERS AT THE FIRST ANNUAL & STRATEGIC PLANNING CONVENING

As AASF grew over the last two years, the organization’s founders recognized that working towards their organizational mission is a long-term task in need of long-term leadership. In 2022, AASF moved to professionalize the organization by recruiting their first executive director, Gisela Perez Kusakawa, a results-driven civil rights leader, policy expert, and attorney with a proven record in advocacy under multiple presidential administrations. She is a bridge builder that has experience in building new infrastructure and programming to address urgent needs, as well as nurturing partnerships and fostering solidarity between diverse groups and political ideologies.

Prior to accepting her leadership role with AASF, Kusakawa served as the Founding Director & Supervising Attorney of the Anti-Profilimg, Civil Rights, & National Security department (formerly the Anti-Racial Profiling Project) at Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC), one of the largest and leading national Asian American civil rights organization in the country. In this role, she led their advocacy efforts on anti-profilimg, civil rights, and national security; established the foundation of the new department; fostered new partnerships; and laid the groundwork for a legal referral service. Gisela was the primary and lead drafter and legal strategist for amicus briefs for Professors Xiaoxing Xi and Feng Tao. She has been a trailblazer and expert on policy and advocacy on anti-profilimg, national security, and civil rights, having spearheaded coalition work to end the U.S. Department of Justice’s “China Initiative,” and appeared on multiple media publications such as NBC News, Science, LA Times, NPR and MIT Technology Review.

In her previous work with asylum seekers and detained immigrants, Kusakawa successfully won a grant of asylum for a mother and daughter from Honduras. She served indigent immigrants under AmeriCorps in Ohio, and worked as a teacher in Ise City, Japan where she was also a disaster relief volunteer for the Tohoku tsunami. In her younger years, Gisela worked on business and job development in the rural villages of the Philippines, and was a former Rotary Scholar at Kofu City, Japan.

Her community involvement includes serving on the Board of Directors for the Asian Pacific American Bar Association Education Fund, the Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership, the National Filipino American Lawyers Association, and as a Founder & President-Elect of the Filipino American Lawyers Association of Washington, D.C. For her work in civil rights and public service, Kusakawa had the honor of receiving the Justice Thurgood Marshall Civil Liberties Award and was awarded the competitive National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) Law Foundation Community Law Fellowship, which seeks to develop public interest law leaders to advance Asian American civil rights.

Kusakawa is a first-generation immigrant who hails from the Philippines and spent her childhood in Tondo, Manila before moving to the United States. Overcoming tremendous odds for a better life in America, Kusakawa became an attorney to dedicate her life to public service and help the many immigrants and families seeking safety and compassion in the United States. Kusakawa is admitted to practice law at the District of Columbia and the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, and received her J.D. from The George Washington University Law School.

AASF is honored and grateful to have welcomed Gisela Perez Kusakawa to lead the organization. In her short tenure thus far, she has proven herself to be a fearless leader and powerful advocate. AASF looks forward to many years ahead of growth, empowerment, advocacy wins and more under her leadership.

AASF WELCOMES THEIR FIRST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GISELA PEREZ KUSAKAWA



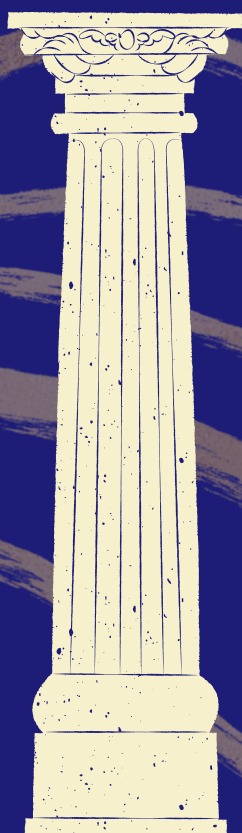
AASF Executive Director Gisela P. Kusakawa at the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) representing AASF for the first time in her new role. NAPABA has around 60,000 attorney, judge, law professor, and law student members and this day represented a **new bridge between the scholar, civil rights, and legal community.**

She spoke alongside Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC President & Executive Director, John C. Yang; Fred T. Korematsu Founder and Executive Director, Dr. Karen Korematsu, Brennan Center Counsel, Spencer Reynolds; and Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus Executive Director, Aarti Kohli.

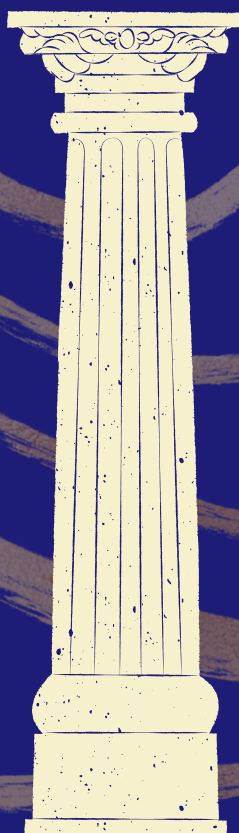


**ASIAN AMERICAN SCHOLAR FORUM'S
THREE PILLARS:
EDUCATING, ADVANCING, AND PROMOTING
LEADERS**

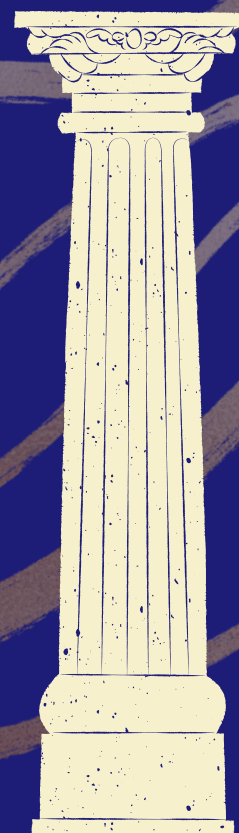
AASF's work is guided by three core pillars:



**Educating
Through Data-
Collection &
Partnership**



**Advancing and
Protecting
Civil Rights**



**Promoting
Transformational
Contributions &
Scholars**

In the pages that follow, we highlight the ways in which we have realized the goals of each pillar in 2022-23.

EDUCATING THROUGH DATA-COLLECTION & PARTNERSHIP



SECURING A SEAT AT THE TABLE

This year, AASF was formally voted in as a new member of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA), a coalition of the country’s oldest and most influential Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) non-profit organizations. NCAPA has longstanding ties in Washington, DC and well established credibility with the federal government, media, civil rights groups, and communities nationwide. NCAPA serves to represent the interests of the greater AANHPI communities and to provide a national voice for AA and NHPI issues. Through NCAPA, AASF will be working to ensure the scholar community has a seat at the table and can educate and inform decisions that impact scholars and all communities.

Said **Gregg Orton, national director of NCAPA**: “NCAPA is thrilled to welcome the Asian American Scholar Forum (AASF) into our coalition. AASF has emerged as a leading voice for the Asian American scholar community, and their work to fight for the rights of Asian American and immigrant scientists, researchers, and scholars is essential for the advancement of our communities.”



AASF Executive Director, Gisela P. Kusakawa with Act to Change Co-Founder, Jill Yu



AASF Executive Director with the National Council of Asian Pacific America (NCAPA) members



President Joe Biden welcomes AASF and other NCAPA organizations to celebrate AANHPI Heritage Month at the White House

EDUCATING THROUGH DATA-COLLECTION & PARTNERSHIP



“CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE: FEARS OF CHINESE-AMERICAN SCIENTISTS” REPORT

On September 23, 2022, AASF proudly released a new report titled “[Caught in the Crossfire: Fears of Chinese-American Scientists](#),” which featured a study revealing that a growing number of Chinese-descent scientists have left or are considering leaving the US to take positions in China and other countries, and are avoiding federal grant application due to widespread fears of potential federal investigation and an increasingly hostile and unwelcoming research environment in the US. The report was published by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) and authored by AASF members:

Yu Xie (Center on Contemporary China, Princeton University)

Xihong Lin (Department of Biostatistics and Department of Statistics, Harvard University)

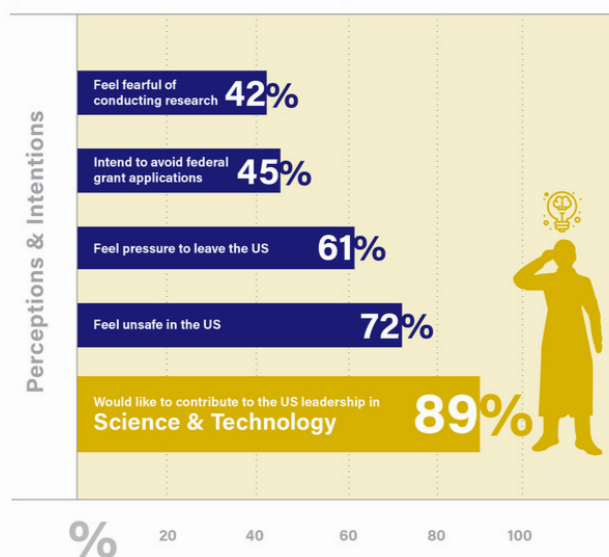
Ju Li (Department of Nuclear Science & Engineering and Departments of Materials Science and Engineering, MIT)

Qian He (Center on Contemporary China, Princeton University)

Junming Huang (Center on Contemporary China, Princeton University)

The study, which was originally announced in an exclusive in the [Wall Street Journal](#), is based on the results of an AASF-conducted national academic climate survey of scientists of Chinese descent employed by US universities in tenured or tenure-track positions (n=1300) between December 2021 and March 2022.

Perceptions & Intentions of Scholars of Chinese Descent who Participated in the AASF National Survey
(n=1300, December 2021-March 2022)



Key findings:

- Although an overwhelming majority (89%) of the survey respondents indicated a desire to contribute to the US leadership in science and technology, most feel unsafe (72%), and many feel fearful of conducting research in the US (42%).
- Approximately 61% of the survey respondents reported feeling pressure to leave the US—particularly junior faculty and federal grant awardees—and 45% reported that they intend to avoid federal grant applications—particularly engineering and computer science faculty.
- Of the respondents who intended to avoid applying for federal grants, 84% indicated that this was due to fears of being held legally liable if they made mistakes in forms and disclosures, and 65% reported that this was due to worries that their collaborations with Chinese researchers or institutions would place them under suspicion.
- Of the five possible reasons provided by the survey for not feeling safe as an academic researcher in the US, most respondents pointed to fears of US government investigations into Chinese-origin researchers (67%) and Anti-Asian hate and violence in the US (65%).
- Analysis of the responses revealed that life science faculty were 1.8 times (1.8x) and engineering and computing science faculty were 2.1 times (2.1x) more fearful of conducting routine research and academic activities than physical science faculty.

EDUCATING THROUGH DATA-COLLECTION & PARTNERSHIP



The authors write that the study demonstrates, “unintended consequences of the China Initiative that are harmful to American science,” including discouraging new scholars of Chinese origin from working in the US, encouraging world class Chinese-American scientists to leave the US, and discouraging experienced Chinese-American scientists from securing federal sponsorship. They conclude, “Addressing the fears of scientists of Chinese origin and making the academic environment welcoming and attractive for all will help retain and attract scientific talent and strengthen the US leadership in science and technology in the long run.”

Loss of Talent / Family Separation

2012-2022



AASF took opportunities to educate and present findings of the national survey data with university leaders, media, the general public, and policymakers, such as in congressional briefings and in a meeting with the White House, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of Education (DOE), the Department of State (DOS), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the National Science Foundation (NSF). The presentation was very well received by the administration leaders, and many expressed serious concerns about the increasing departures of scientific and technological leaders from the US.

“

What attracts scientists the most is not material comfort but academic freedom and opportunities to pursue one’s ideas; for a long time, the US has been providing a working environment that is more conducive to these values than that of any other country. This is and should remain a distinctive advantage of the US.

”

The report authors warn that if these developments continue, American science will likely suffer the loss of scientific talent to China and other countries, especially in computer and engineering sciences and the life-saving life sciences. Addressing the fears of scientists of Chinese origin and making the academic environment welcoming and attractive for all will help retain and attract scientific talent and strengthen the US leadership in science and technology in the long run.

EDUCATING THROUGH DATA-COLLECTION & PARTNERSHIP



EDUCATIONAL WEBINARS IN 2022-23

In 2022-23, AASF co-hosted over 17 webinars with over 35,000 views to educate the Asian American scholar community, policymakers, media, and the general public on topics ranging from individual civil rights to the implications of federal policies. Our educational webinars were co-sponsored by and co-organized with partner associations:



With topics ranging from “[Gang Chen’s Case and the Future of the China Initiative](#),” to “[Contributions of Asian Americans in U.S. Science and Engineering](#),” AASF was proud to collaborate with its many partners in 2022-23 to bring timely and informative content to its growing network, featuring some of the nation’s top researchers and experts.

As part of our webinar offerings, AASF launched “Know Your Rights” sessions to equip scholars with a better understanding of their individual rights and the United States’ legal system. In these sessions, AASF features legal experts, including AASF’s Executive Director who is a licensed attorney, and offers resources and support for directly impacted persons.



FEATURED
WEBINAR
SPEAKERS
FROM 2022-23

EDUCATING THROUGH DATA-COLLECTION & PARTNERSHIP



In addition to webinars, AASF was also represented on various other platforms. Our Executive Director spoke at the annual convention of National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, which represents around 60,000 attorneys, judges, law professors, and law students, and at [Stanford University's Hoover Institution](#) alongside Former Ambassador and Governor Gary Locke.



AASF Executive Director, Gisela P. Kusakawa at Stanford University's Hoover Institution alongside Hoover Fellows and Former Ambassador & Governor Gary Locke.

For more information on our webinars, including speaker lists and webinar recordings, visit our [webinar webpage](#).

PARTNERSHIPS & EXPANDING LEGAL EDUCATION

AASF established a partnership with the U.S.-Asia Law Institute (USALI) of New York University Law to further legal research on issues impacting Asian Americans and scholars. USALI is one of America's preeminent research centers in the country promoting rule of law and human rights, and working towards legal reform in Asia and the United States. We hosted a research associate in 2022 and will be hosting a law fellow in 2023 to further conduct crucial legal research.

We are working towards a pilot law course to be co-taught by Seton Hall Professor Margaret Lewis and our Executive Director and fellow attorney, Gisela P. Kusakawa. AASF is working with law schools and other institutions to include into their legal curriculum the seminal cases of Chinese American scientists, Professors Gang Chen, Xiaoxing Xi, and Anming Hu, who were instrumental in combating racial bias against and profiling of Asian Americans and immigrants in the United States. All impacted scientists have agreed to work with AASF to ensure the next generation of attorneys learn from their cases.

AASF partnered with the Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership (CAPAL), the leading Asian American organization to build an Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander public service pipeline for students, by hosting CAPAL students and potential future public interest leaders.

ADVANCING AND PROTECTING CIVIL RIGHTS



AASF BUILDS BRIDGES, CREATES THEIR OWN SEAT AT THE TABLE, AND OPENS THE DOOR FOR OTHERS

In 2022-23, AASF spearheaded high level meetings with the White House and federal agencies, including most recently with the U.S. State Department Under Secretary Jose W. Fernandez, to discuss issues of importance to Asian Americans and scholars. We have convened dialogue between high level officials within the Biden administration and university leadership, and act as a resource and expert for federal agency and Congressional staffers, including by conducting educational meetings and briefings for policymakers and staffers.

We have also positioned ourselves to be a reliable and trusted resource to policymakers and staffers. We were proud to lead recommendations to the White House on disclosure requirements within the Asian American and civil rights advocacy community. Last year, our education efforts and data collection helped prevent the inclusion of a harmful amendment in the CHIPS PLUS legislation and in the annual National Defense Authorization Act. We continue to work towards educating policymakers and staffers, and providing a voice for the Asian American and scholar community.



AASF President Yasheng Huang, Executive Director Gisela P. Kusakawa & AASF Member Edward Guo met with U.S. State Department Under Secretary Jose W. Fernandez

AASF joined together with partners on several other advocacy and educational efforts in 2022-23. We collaborated to publish a letter in Science Magazine to uplift and respond to an article by science policy reporter, Jeffrey Mervis, that raised concerns about the China Initiative. We also partnered with NYU's US-Asia Law Institute to host a research associate to conduct legal and policy research for AASF—a partnership that will continue into 2023-24 and bring a new law fellow to the AASF team.

Having secured “a seat at the table” in its early years, AASF will continue to leverage its research and growing relationships with policymakers to promote and protect the rights of Asian Americans and scholars in the years ahead. As we continue to empower our communities, we will reach across divides and continue to build coalitions, foster dialogue, and strengthen relationships of trust as we all work together towards a brighter future.

ADVANCING AND PROTECTING CIVIL RIGHTS



AASF'S ADVOCACY HELPS PUT AN END TO THE DOJ'S "CHINA INITIATIVE" AND SUPPORTS UNJUSTLY PROSECUTED SCHOLARS

As part of our ongoing advocacy work in 2022-23 on behalf of Asian American scientists and scholars, AASF was instrumental in the termination of the Justice Department's "China Initiative", which fostered widespread fear of the targeting and prosecution of Asian American scholars, researchers, and scientists. We worked with advocacy and civil rights organizations to secure "a seat at the table" with the White House, Congressional representatives, and the Department of Justice. As a result, AASF was the only non-profit in 2022-23 to represent and provide a voice on behalf of the Asian American scholar community in crucial meetings with high level officials in the federal government.

In her previous role, our new Executive Director, Gisela Kusakawa, was crucial in bringing together civil rights and community organizations to terminate the Department of Justice's China Initiative. She spearheaded coalition work across a wide spectrum of civil rights organizations such as the ACLU, Brennan Center, Amnesty International, our own AASF, and other non-profits. The ending of the China Initiative was a significant step forward towards addressing racial bias and profiling—which existed long before the China Initiative—but there is still much work to be done to ensure that the community's concerns are properly addressed and harms prevented and remedied.

AASF has continued to engage in this necessary and ongoing work. As part of our impact litigation work, AASF submitted a letter to Judge Julie Robinson to provide additional context as she made her determination on our colleague Dr. Franklin Tao's sentencing. AASF's letter was one of only two letters that the defense attorney highlighted out of the more than 20 letters submitted. Our arguments for the validity of Dr. Tao's research in the letter were featured in Science, in an article highlighting Judge Robinson's decision.^{1,2} We celebrated that Judge Robinson agreed with much of the arguments in our letter and decided to impose no prison time or fines—a decision that shows how crucial it is for the Asian American and scholar community to use their voice and create opportunities to bridge the scholar and scientific community with legal and advocacy spaces. AASF also co-hosted a press briefing for Dr. Tao in Kansas City to draw national attention to the case and conducted community outreach, which successfully resulted in a full court room. Our Executive Director's [live coverage and analysis](#) of the hearing reached more than 36,000 people.



AASF Vice President Dr. Kai Li and Executive Director Gisela P. Kusakawa at the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Support of AASF Member Dr. Xiaoxing Xi along with other community and civil rights organizations.

Most recently, in the courts, Dr. Xiaoxing Xi—who AASF supported in the aforementioned [amicus brief](#)—won an [appeal](#) that will allow him to bring a lawsuit against the FBI for wrongful prosecution and unlawful search, seizure, and surveillance. In her previous role, our Executive Director Gisela Kusakawa was the primary and lead drafter and legal strategist for an [amicus brief](#) with the Third Circuit Court of Appeals on behalf of Dr. Xi, garnering the support of AASF and over 70 organizations—an unprecedented number of signatories for an amicus brief. Dr. Xi's case is a seminal case in bringing about accountability and transparency from the federal government.

As we continue to monitor the status of other pending legal cases and the changes implemented in various government programs, we will continue to educate and advocate for the rights of Asian Americans and scholars. We will also monitor new legal issues that arise for Asian Americans and scholars, including border stops and surveillance, and work to ensure our communities have a voice and the necessary resources to fully understand their rights.

1 AASF Sends Letter to Judge Robinson for Dr. Feng (Franklin) Tao's Sentencing, Asian-Asian Scholar Forum (Jan. 18, 2023), <https://www.aasforum.org/2023/01/18/aasf-sends-letter-to-judge-robinson-for-dr-feng-franklin-taos-sentencing/>.

2 Jeffrey Mervis, No Jail Time for Kansas Professor Convicted for Undisclosed Research Ties to China, Science (Jan. 18, 2023), <https://www.science.org/content/article/no-jail-time-kansas-professor-convicted-undisclosed-research-ties-china>.

THE “PERPETUAL FOREIGNERS” & CONVENIENT SCAPEGOATS: TACKLING THE ROOT OF THE CYCLICAL TARGETING & PROFILING OF ASIAN AMERICANS



By: Gisela P. Kusakawa, AASF Executive Director

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the *coram nobis* cases that overturned the convictions of Gordon Hirabayashi, Minoru Yasui, and Fred Korematsu—civil rights icons who went to the courts and challenged the injustices that thousands of Japanese Americans and immigrants faced in what was one of the darkest stains in our nation’s history.¹

More than eighty years ago, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing the removal of people of Japanese ancestry—citizens and children alike—from their homes and communities; over 120,000 U.S. residents of Japanese ancestry were incarcerated in remote detention camps in the name of “national security” under the racist rationale that any people of Japanese descent were more prone to acts of espionage or sabotage.² In 1988, the government issued a formal admission of failure, and Congress eventually acknowledged that “these actions were carried out without adequate security reasons and without any acts of espionage or sabotage documented by the Commission [on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians], and were motivated largely by racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.”³

Yet decades after the systemic incarceration of Japanese Americans, we find ourselves repeating history as Asian Americans are treated as “perpetual foreigners” and economic or national security threats. It has become a harmful pattern that when the United States has tensions with an Asian country, Asian Americans and immigrants face the backlash at home and become collateral damage. Perceived as “not American,” Asian Americans are blamed for the actions of a foreign government or entity, face heightened scrutiny, and are subjected to questioning about their loyalty. Racial justice and the treatment of Asian Americans are intrinsically tied with the perception of being “foreign”—whether the individual in question is a citizen or a fifth generation in the United States. Seen as perpetual foreigners, we too often are perceived as outsiders, and make for convenient scapegoats as economic or national security “threats.”

The consequences of being perceived as a “perpetual foreigner,” and unjustly as the representative of a foreign government or entity has often proven to be fatal. This was the case for Vincent Chin, a Chinese American who was murdered in 1982 by two white men who mistook him as Japanese at a time when US-Japan tensions were high due to economic competition. The two men walked away with just a \$3,000 fine. Kin Yee, president of the Detroit Chinese Welfare Council, claimed that the light sentence essentially gave them “a license to kill for \$3,000.” One of the killers had said during the brutal attack, “It’s because of you little motherf—ers that we’re out of work,” revealing their rationale behind the murder.⁴ Like all too many before him, Vincent was a scapegoat and blamed for the problems that the American auto industry faced in competition with the Japanese auto industry.



1 Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and World War II, National Museum of American History (February 15, 2017), <https://americanhistory.si.edu/righting-wrong-japanese-americans-and-world-war-ii>.
2 Japanese American Life During Internment, U.S. National Park Service (March 6, 2023), <https://www.nps.gov/articles/japanese-american-internment-archeology.htm>.
3 U.S. Code 50 § 4202 (1988)
4 Becky Little, How the 1982 Murder of Vincent Chin Ignited a Push for Asian American Rights, HISTORY (May 5, 2020), <https://www.history.com/news/vincent-chin-murder-asian-american-rights>.

THE “PERPETUAL FOREIGNERS” & CONVENIENT SCAPEGOATS: TACKLING THE ROOT OF THE CYCLICAL TARGETING & PROFILING OF ASIAN AMERICANS



In this modern age, Asian Americans are still made for convenient scapegoats. Alarmingly, 1 in 5 Americans believe Asian Americans are partly responsible for COVID-19, and 1 in 3 Americans believe Asian Americans are more loyal to countries other than the U.S.⁵ As a result, the Asian American community has experienced not only years of anti-Asian hate and violence within their own neighborhoods and homes, but also heightened scrutiny from their places of employment and their own government. We have seen in the past decade U.S. government officials fuel anti-Asian bigotry through xenophobic and anti-China rhetoric and policymaking. Racial bias against persons of Asian descent has permeated our society and federal agencies for decades, leading our communities to experience waves of profiling and targeting by both individuals and our own government.⁶

“**The current reality for many is that the intensified scrutiny of Asian Americans did not start nor end with the Department of Justice’s “China Initiative.” We must remain vigilant that history does not repeat itself..**

Due to the long-standing legacy of scapegoating Asian Americans, professionals such as Professor Xiaoxing Xi and Sherry Chen found themselves subjected to heightened scrutiny and their lives upended along with many other scientists. This intensified under the Department of Justice’s now-defunct “China Initiative,” which wreaked havoc on the lives of scholars such as Professor Anming Hu and Professor Gang Chen, along with their families. While the announcement of the end of the problematic initiative was a welcomed step towards healing for our communities, we still have a long way to go. The current reality for many is that the intensified scrutiny of Asian Americans did not start nor end with the Department of Justice’s “China Initiative.” We must remain vigilant that history does not repeat itself, and tackle the underlying issues and deeply rooted perception of Asian Americans as disloyal “perpetual foreigners.”

Aware of these inherent biases against Asian Americans, we must be prepared to be critical of economic or national security pretexts that can be used to perpetuate racial bias and profiling of Asian Americans. We need to work to create the infrastructure and invest in Asian American non-profits that can end this cycle and educate communities. Asian Americans must not continue to be treated as threats and viewed as “perpetual foreigners” in our own country. We must learn from the past and those before us. As Fred Korematsu once said: “No one should ever be locked away simply because they share the same race, ethnicity, or religion as a spy or terrorist. If that principle was not learned from the internment of Japanese Americans, then these are very dangerous times for our democracy.”⁹

5 Meghan Roos, Survey Shows 1 in 5 Americans ‘Partly’ Blame Asian Americans for COVID, Newsweek (May 5, 2022),

<https://www.newsweek.com/survey-shows-1-5-americans-partly-blame-asian-americans-covid-1704024>.

6 Emil Guillermo, Petition Demands Apology for Chinese-American Scientists Previously Accused of Spying, NBC News (May 17, 2016),

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/petition-demands-apology-chinese-american-scientists-previously-accused-spying-n575461>.

7 Ryan Lucas, The Justice Department Is Ending Its Controversial China Initiative, NPR (February 23, 2022),

<https://www.npr.org/2022/02/23/1082593735/justice-department-china-initiative>.

8 Ellen Barry and Katie Benner, U.S. Drops Its Case Against M.I.T. Scientist Accused of Hiding China Links, The New York Times (January 20, 2022),

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/20/science/gang-chen-mit-china-initiative.html>.

9 Gisela Perez Kusakawa, From Japanese American Incarceration to the China Initiative, Discrimination Against AAPI Communities Must End, ACLU (May 31, 2022), <https://www.aclu.org/news/racial-justice/from-japanese-american-incarceration-to-the-china-initiative-discrimination-against-aapi-communities-must-end>.

PROMOTING TRANSFORMATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS & SCHOLARS



AASF works hard to ensure that Asian American and scholar communities have an amplified national voice and a meaningful seat at the table. We recognize that the federal government, news media, and general public need to hear the experiences and expertise of our communities. The United States needs their expertise, stories, and lived experiences now more than ever. With this goal in mind, we aim to promote the transformational contributions of Asian American scholars to the United States and build up leaders within the Asian American and scholar community.

AASF LAUNCHES PROJECT PIONEER

This year, AASF launched Project Pioneer, a long-term video project that will highlight Asian American scholars' contributions to the United States' leadership in the fields of science and technology. For the first video series, AASF has partnered with the [U.S. National Science Foundation](#) on lifting up the contributions of Asian American inventors who have significantly impacted our everyday lives. The series will feature trailblazers including Dr. Simon Sze, Dr. Raj Reddy, Dr. Teresa Meng, and Dr. Nasir Ahmed, whose work has not only revolutionized several key science and technology fields, but also enhanced our understanding of the world, and improved the way we live, work, and communicate. Our launch during Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month reached [over 18,000 viewers](#).

We look forward to spotlighting more scholar leaders in this series in the months ahead, and are working on future educational efforts with local museums and the Friends of the National Asian Pacific American Smithsonian Museum—a non-profit that working towards the creation of our country's first national museum for the Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community.

Simon Sze
Dr. Simon Sze and Dr. Dawon Kahng (1931-92) co-discovered the floating-gate memory effect in 1967, which enabled the development of flash memory that allows us to store hundreds of feature movies on a USB stick and endless videos on a cell phone.

Raj Reddy
Dr. Raj Reddy pioneered continuous speech-recognition technology in 1974 that enables a computer to understand full sentences of a human speech. Our kids can now talk to Alexa or Siri to make magic happen.

Frank Chang
Dr. M.C. Frank Chang developed high-performance and low-cost power amplifiers in the early 1990s for mobile communication chips developed during the past three decades for mass production of cell phones. Today with a small battery, we can spend hours on cell phones instead of minutes.

Nasir Ahmed
Dr. Nasir Ahmed invented Discrete Cosine Transform (DCT) in early 1970s, which is the technology foundation for audio, images, and video compression. His invention helps us connect with our colleagues, family and friends in video meetings regardless of the physical distance.

Teresa Meng
Dr. Teresa Meng invented how to build highly integrated radio-on-a-chip in the late 1990s which revolutionized wireless communication. Her company Atheros Communications, Inc. pioneered Wi-Fi technologies which allow most devices to connect us together wherever we go.



AASF Executive Director Gisela P. Kusakawa with Friends of the National Asian Pacific American Smithsonian Museum Chief Operating Officer, Ting Xu; APIA Vote Executive Director, Christine Chen; and White House Office of the Chief of Staff Policy Advisor on AA and NHPI, Hannah Y. Kim

PROMOTING TRANSFORMATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS & SCHOLARS



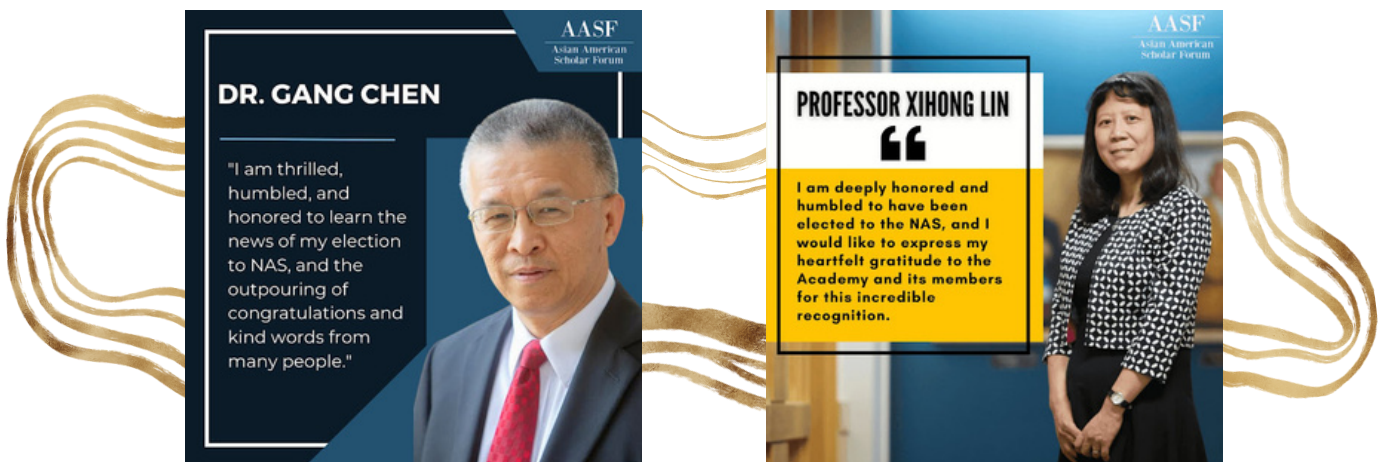
EQUIPPING LEADERS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

In June 2023, AASF partnered with the Asian Pacific American Institution of Congressional Studies (APAICS) and worked with White House Presidential Personnel Office (PPO) to educate the AASF community on the appointment process and pathways to leadership and public service within the federal government. Established in 1971, the PPO is responsible for aiding the President in over 4,000 political appointees. APAICS is the leading organization promoting Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander participation and representation at all levels of the political process.

Our webinar in collaboration with APAICS helped demystify the process by which those in the scholar community can become Presidential appointees. Joined by current political appointees and representatives from the PPO, the webinar provided an exciting opportunity for AASF members to learn more about powerful ways to amplify their voices, increase their representation in government, and serve the common good. AASF will continue to work with our partners to help encourage a public service pipeline for Asian Americans and scholars.

PROMOTING AND CELEBRATING ASIAN AMERICAN SCHOLARS

AASF began uplifting its scholars in 2022-23 through member elections to national academies to celebrate and promote their critical work in science and technology. In May 2023, two AASF board members were elected to the National Academy of Sciences, one of the highest honors in the scientific community. We celebrate the election of Dr. Gang Chen and Dr. Xihong Lin in recognition of their distinguished and continuing achievements in original research. We also celebrated the numerous accomplishments of our members, such as Dr. Yi Cui becoming the new Director of Stanford University's Precourt Institute for Energy and Dr. Chuan He winning the 2023 Wolf Prize.



The work continues to secure our seat at the table and foster open scientific environments for the scholar community. AASF looks forward to continuing and launching a variety of projects that will support our members, educate the public, and further our mission in 2023-24 and beyond.

- **Grow *Project Pioneer*:** AASF will continue to explore relationships with potential partners, such as museums, to create and host exhibits, webinar series, and distributions of educational materials related to the Project Pioneer series.
- **Engage as a New Task Force Member of the Asian Pacific American History and Culture:** AASF accepted an invitation to join the Task Force on Asian Pacific American History and Culture—made up of AA and NHPI historians and leaders of organizations—that will advise on their community’s unique contributions to American history and culture. This taskforce will provide curatorial narratives and data that will inform a Congressional Commission on the potential creation of a national museum.
- **Launch Legal Education & Defense Fund:** AASF will launch our Legal Education and Defense Fund to provide financial resources to impacted persons to help support their litigation defense. The Fund will also support educational efforts, such as Know Your Rights training, and case study education.
- **Expand Legal Education:** AASF will complete the development of a pilot law course that will be co-taught by Professor Margaret Lewis and AASF Executive Director Gisela P. Kusakawa at Seton Hall Law School. We will continue our efforts to add the seminal cases of Chinese American scholars, Professors Gang Chen, Xiaoxing Xi, and Anming Hu to law school curriculum and textbooks.
- **Build Our Reach in the Legal Community:** This year, Professors Gang Chen, Xiaoxing Xi, and Anming Hu, and AASF Executive Director Gisela P. Kusakawa will serve on a panel with the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)—an organization that consists of around 60,000 attorneys, judges, law professors, and law students.
- **Partner with NYU Law’s US-Asia Law Institute:** This Fall 2023, AASF is welcoming a new law fellow from NYU Law’s US-Asia Law Institute (USALI) to further AASF’s legal research on issues impacting Asian Americans and scholars.

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