



APAICS

Asian Pacific American Institute for
Congressional Studies

1001 Connecticut Ave, NW., Suite 530
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: (202) 296-9200 Fax: (202) 296-9236
Email: apaics@apaics.org
www.apaics.org

For Immediate Release:
Contact: RGMoy (202) 296-9200

OH, WHAT AN APAICS NIGHT!

In celebration of the 30th Anniversary of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS) had a spectacular evening, Tuesday, May 20, 2008. There was something for everyone at their 14th Annual Gala Dinner black-tie affair at the JW Marriott.

Starting off the fun-filled evening were the co-hosts of the event, Yul Kwon, winner of CBS's reality show "Survivor: Cook Islands," and finalist Rebekah S. Lee, Founder and Executive Director Becky's Fund. The light banter between them throughout the evening added to the jovial atmosphere and put the audience in a light-hearted mood. At one point Kwon stated that he was glad he did not embarrass himself "on national television and replace William Hung as the icon of American geekiness."

After the welcoming speech by immediate Past Chairman Clayton S. Fong, Congressman Michael M. Honda (D-CA) greeted the audience and spoke about his role and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), which he chairs. There were a number of congressional staffers who attended the event and are members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Staff Association (CAPASA), including Victoria Tung, CAPASA Vice President.

"Building Today for Tomorrow" seemed to be the appropriate theme for many of the people who were in attendance. Professionals from many careers were criss-crossing the room to network.

Also in attendance were Congressman and Mrs. Bobby Scott (D-VA), Congressman and Mrs. David Wu (D-OR), Congressman Ed Pastor (D-AZ), Congressman Xavier Becerra (D-CA), Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo (D-GU), former members Charlie Wilson and Nancy Johnson, and Executive White House Chef Crista Comerford. Located officials included Assistant Secretary for business and Economic Development and Senior Technology Advisor for the State of Maryland, Director of the D.C. Mayor's Office on Asian Pacific Islander Affairs Julie Koo, Special Counsel to the Acting Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, Department of Justice Ollie Cantos VII, and Matthew Shiraki with the Department of HHS.

Before the dinner was served, to play on how cast members on "Survivor" must "catch" or get their own meal, Kwon pretending to sniff the air, said that he could smell the food and would "arm-wrestle" her for it. With a mischievous look in her eyes, Lee said that they were "not" on "Survivor." Kwon then apologized for still being competitive. Lee then pushes Kwon aside and returns to her seat smiling while dinner was being served.

After dinner, the first presentation of two APAICS' Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Awards went to Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI) which was presented to him by Mrs. Nancy Horton-Lang, widow of Congressman Frank Horton, who is credited for putting in legislation to establish Asian Pacific American Heritage Day/Week/Month. Mrs. Horton-Lang was very emotional when she spoke about her late husband's friendship with the Akakas and how proud Congressman Horton felt when he put forth the legislation to honor the people of a culture he deeply respected. She also cited the Senator's many contributions before presenting him the award. Senator Akaka was deeply touched that Mrs. Horton-Lang shared this moment with him and how surprised he was that she was present this evening. He also mentioned the important work that APAICS does in promoting summer interns, fellowships, Leadership Academy and other programs that build character and moral fortitude to carve a place in today's society. "It is important for us to do this," said the Senator.

Patricia F. Saiki, former member of Congress and U.S. Small Business Administrator, received the second APAICS' Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award, which was presented to her by Clayton S. Fong. Fong credited her with moving 25 bills on women's rights into law when she was a representative and that the 2008 package of legislative bills that the Hawaii State Legislature felt appropriate for this legislative session is dedicated to Patricia Saiki. Fong also surprised her with a recently passed resolution of the legislature recognizing the honor being bestowed her this evening. In her response, Saiki credited her husband and family for allowing her to have the time to seek her career. She had her own cheering section this evening, including her son, Stewart, who she asked in a motherly tone to stand up and be recognized. She credited her former staffers and friends for sharing her illustrious careers and helping her to remain positive.

The coveted APAICS' Distinguished Community Leadership Achievement Award was presented by David Lin, AT&T Director of Constituency Relations, to Stewart Kwoh, President and Executive Director of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center. Lin spoke about Stewart's "tireless efforts in proactively fostering cross-ethnic relations with MALDEF and the Urban League in Los Angeles." He also said that Lin gives back to his community either in areas such as affordable housing for low-income services and families or legal work. Kwoh has a very deep passion for the law so much so that in his accepting the award cited a sweatshop issue in Los Angeles, a case where "Asian Americans had been working for seven years under deplorable conditions." He was advised not to take the case because of the long hours and no pay. Because of the successful outcome of this case, Kwoh saw legislation enacted into law that prevents degrading working conditions.

Before introducing the entertainment, Lee congratulated Kwon on his recent engagement, his charity work in the APA community regarding bone marrow donors, politically empowering youth, speaking at the FBI Academy, raising the level of visible APAs in media through his work on CNN and the Discovery Channel, and starting his Red Mango frozen yogurt franchise. Kwon expressed admiration that Lee used all her "Survivor" finalist money to start a nonprofit to help victims of domestic violence in the APA community. Any one who is interested may contact her at www.beckysfund.org.

Wrapping up the festivities for the night was the legendary jazz ensemble Hiroshima. Describing their style of music is a pleasant sound of jazz with a hint of Asian fusion. Every once in a while you could hear distinctive notes coming from instruments that were being soothingly strummed or tickled to "speak" to the audience in those groovy, laid back sounds to

romance you into a musical love affair. Hiroshima's leader is Dan Kuramoto, who is the tenor and soprano, on saxophone, flute, keyboards, synthesizer, percussion, shakuhachi; June Kuramoto on the koto; James Comwell on piano, synthesizer, Rhodes, clavinet; Shoji Kameda on taiko, percussion, and voice; Dean Cortez on bass; and Danny Yamamoto on drums.

Kim Delevett, Manager, Corporate Community Affairs at Southwest Airlines, drew the winning raffle for two round-trip unrestricted tickets. The winner had to be present. Bostonian Gloria Mak, former 2007 APAICS Summer Intern, who came to Washington just to volunteer for the Gala, was the winner.

When asked to describe the evening, as one APAICS' Fellow Gene Kim was heard to say, "It was awesome!"

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