



Agenda Item: 4b
Meeting Date: May 23, 2023

PROCLAMATION OF THE PORT OF SEATTLE COMMISSION

WHEREAS, Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI), Heritage Month is a time to acknowledge and celebrate the innumerable contributions of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders in furtherance of our civil society; and

WHEREAS, the celebration of AANHPI heritage month started as an idea of Jeanie Jew, a fourth generation Chinese American, and an aid to U.S. Representative Frank Horton; and

WHEREAS, in 1978 President Jimmy Carter signed a joint resolution, introduced by U.S. Representatives Frank Horton and Norman Y. Mineta in the House and a companion bill introduced by U.S. Senators Daniel Inouye and Spark Matsunaga in the Senate, designating the first ten days in May as an annual celebration of “Asian Pacific Heritage Week”; and

WHEREAS, in 1992 President George H.W. Bush signed a bill designating the month of May as “Asian Pacific American Heritage Month”, honoring two significant events in American history: the arrival of the first Japanese immigrant in the United States on May 7, 1843, and the completion of the first transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869, where more than 20,000 Chinese workers contributed; and

WHEREAS, in 2000, the Washington State Legislature followed suit by declaring the month of May as “Asian Pacific American Heritage Month” while Governor Gary Locke, our first Governor of Asian descent, was in office; then in 2022 Governor Jay Inslee proclaimed the month of May to be “Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Heritage Month” following the language of the Presidential Proclamation; and

WHEREAS, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders have lived and worked in Washington State since before its founding and have played a part in the rich cultural heritage of this state; and

WHEREAS, the population of Asians, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders is the second largest and fastest-growing demographic group in Washington State at over 949,000 and in King County at approximately 465,000; and

WHEREAS, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders are diverse with very distinct cultures and histories, representative of 48 Asian and Pacific Island nations. AANHPI Heritage Month is a time to elevate and celebrate the many lived experiences of these communities; and

WHEREAS, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders activism and collaboration for social justice, civil rights, and economic opportunities were born from discrimination such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII and oppression of Filipino cannery workers; and

WHEREAS, during the Civil Rights era, locally we witnessed the emergence of AANHPI allyship for access, representation, and opportunities. In the early 1960s, Seattle City Councilmember Wing Luke and Human Rights Commission Chairman Phil Hayasaka worked for access to housing for Asian Americans in Seattle. In the winter of 1971, the Oriental Student Union led by Alan Sugiyama and Black Panther member Mike Tagawa held a sit-in protest at Seattle Central Community College to demand hiring of Asian administrators. When the Kingdome stadium development plans were announced in 1972, Bob Santos led a protest because of its proximity and perceived negative impacts to the Chinatown-International District, and secured mitigation funds for the betterment of the community in 1975; and

WHEREAS, four local activists Bob Santos, Roberto Maestas, Bernie Whitebear, and Larry Gossett, better known as the ‘Gang of Four’ worked to unify their respective communities in solidarity and together achieved political and policy wins and secured resources for the prosperity of communities of color in Seattle. The legacy of the Gang of Four continues to inspire, and the work and the impact of the women who worked side-by-side with them still continues to advocate for opportunities, resources for their respective communities, and advancing future leaders through mentorship and opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders are represented at every level of staffing and leadership at the Port of Seattle. The Employee Resource Group, Home for Asian Pacific Islanders (HAPI) was revived by Faye Sripranaratanakul with the help of Peter Cho in 2017 to be a voice for and to educate, promote, and celebrate AANHPI heritages at the Port; and

WHEREAS, as the ‘Gateway to Asia and the Pacific,’ the Port of Seattle celebrates its top nine international trading partners: China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, and Malaysia, via the Northwest Seaport Alliance, a partnership between the Port of Seattle and the Port of Tacoma; and

WHEREAS, the Port of Seattle celebrates the achievements of our Port of Seattle Commissioners, President Sam Cho, first Asian American, first Korean American, and Vice President Toshiko Grace Hasegawa, first Asian American woman, first Japanese American woman, to serve in leadership in our 111-year history.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Port of Seattle Commission hereby commemorates May 2023 as Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Heritage Month; encourages the continued support of our Port of Seattle HAPI ERG; commits to building an inclusive and unifying environment for all; and acknowledges the importance of advancing leaders through opportunities.

Proclaimed by the Port of Seattle Commission this 23rd day of May, 2023.

Port of Seattle Commission

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