

Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Month



Left to right: AAPI Korean Club speakers Jullie Ji, Amanda Lee Harlan, Bethany Kim-Yin, and Melina My-Ai Doan

The Clark College community commemorated Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Month in May in a variety of ways.

Korean Club hosts speakers discuss racism, acts of violence

On May 31 the college's Korean Club hosted its first-ever Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander event, which it plans to repeat annually. Five speakers talked about their experiences with racism, discrimination and even violence. The speakers were:

- Bethany Kim-Yin, a former social studies teacher and college admissions counselor
- Jin Darnel, president, Korean Society of Vancouver and Washington Asian Cultural Organization
- Jullie Ji, teacher, Korean School of Vancouver; Korean Society of Vancouver
- Amanda Lee Harlan, Clark College Workforce Education Services; president, Justice Impact Club; co-president, Korean Club; board member, Witness to Mass Incarceration
- Melina My-Ai Doan, Clark College student; president of the college's Korean Club

They spoke about being young children and experiencing other students make racist comments about their appearance, their

ethnic food, the way they spoke English.

Bethany Kim-Yin said, "Violence against Asians happens every day. I've been spit upon. One of the lies I still tell myself is that If I stay small, I'll be safe." She added, "We're not big enough for the American dream to be a reality."

Jin Darnel sang in Portland Opera for several seasons. She was the only Asian performer.

She said, "In my life, I've seen so much discrimination. I was very angry about it."

Now she fights back against discrimination by creating opportunities for Asian artists and musicians.

Jullie Ji, a third-generation Asian-American, asked her math professor at Portland State University to explain an equation. The professor's response: Go back to your country. Take ESL classes. Learn to speak English.

To bring Asian communities together, she is organizing a series of summer concerts in Vancouver featuring Asian musicians.

"We're not all that different. We're just different colors," she said.

Melina My-Ai Doan said growing up in Vancouver was hard. The kids at school made fun of her Vietnamese food she brought for lunch. Making friends was difficult. Later, while working at a local movie theater, she experienced a racially motivated verbal attack.

She said, "We have been invisible and ignored. It's time to speak up."

While growing up in the 1980s and 1990s, **Amanda Lee Harlan** said, "I endured a lot of racism, discrimination, name calling, bullying. It's taken its toll. I remember being

ashamed of my culture and my heritage.”

At age 20, she was called a derogatory name and punched in the face by a White Supremacist skinhead and wearing a swastika. Someone called the police, who put her and her husband—not the attacker—into the back of the police car.

“There is still so much violence against Asians, especially against our elders, who don’t feel safe reporting it,” she said. “Community is what we need right now. Having a safe space. Sharing our stories. My goal is to bring awareness to what’s going on in the Asian community and how we can help each other. I’d like to bring all the Asian communities together.”

College Book Club discusses *Minor Feelings*

Clark College’s book club met via Zoom on May 5 to discuss the book *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* by Cathy Park Hong. The book is a *New York Times* bestseller, a Pulitzer Prize finalist and a National Book Critics Circle Award winner. *The Los Angeles Review* wrote: “In *Minor Feelings*, poet and essayist Cathy Park Hong exposes the racism, shame, and erasure forced upon her as a Korean American woman.”

Heather Leasure, Clark’s Student Communication and Retention Manager said about the book, “The takeaway for me was about the structured life she (the author) was forced to lead. Also, the abuse that is rampant in Korean culture, especially from the mother.”

Japanese and Korean club members receive Vancouver City Council

proclamation



Japanese Club picking up Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month proclamation at City Hall

Members of the college's Japanese and Korean Clubs attended the Vancouver City Council meeting in May to receive Vancouver Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle's proclamation that May is "Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month."

The proclamation includes this language:

"Whereas, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders Heritage Month is an annual celebration every May that recognizes the historical and current contributions of individuals and groups of Asian, Hawaiian and Pacific Islander descent within the United States. The umbrella term includes communities from the entire Asian continent, including East, Southeast and South Asia, the Hawaiian Islands, and the Pacific Islands of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. As of last year, there were about 24.3 million people of Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander descent in the United States;

"Whereas, the City of Vancouver recognizes the innumerable contributions, vibrant cultures, and rich histories of AA and NHPI. As some of the fastest-growing racial and ethnic groups in the nation and Vancouver, AA and NHPI communities represent a multitude of ethnicities, languages, and experiences that enrich our community;

"Whereas, this month we proudly celebrate the rich culture and history of Asian American, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islander heritage and history in the City of Vancouver, as we dedicate ourselves to working together to address the challenges that still face so many of our neighbors and members of the Vancouver community."