

# Educator Toolkit

## Understanding and Affirming our K-12



# ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER Students

July 2022



Intro

Immigration and  
Diaspora

Local  
Geography

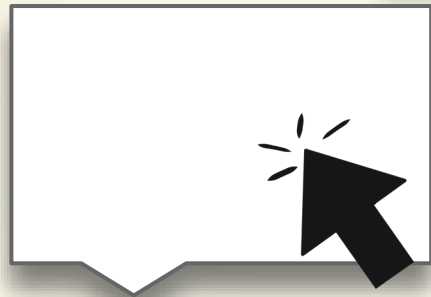
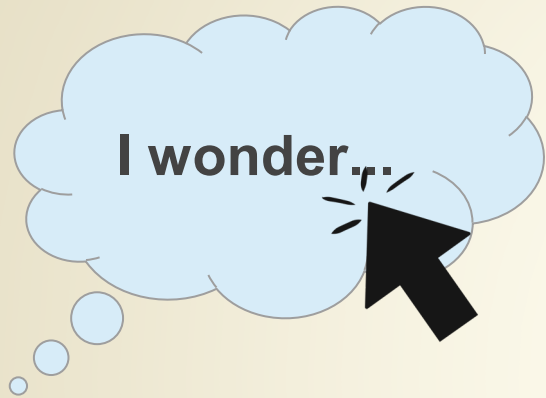
Education &  
Pacific Islanders

Identity

Resources



You may also choose to use these sticky notes or any Google Slides shapes become text boxes when you double click inside.



Need a walkthrough for ideas on how to use this toolkit? Check out this video.

This notebook belongs to:

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## Introduction from the County Superintendent of Schools

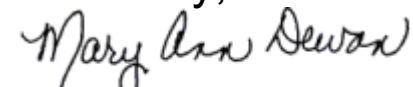
Dear Educators:

The Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) takes great pride in celebrating the diversity of our students and families. Our county's diverse population includes more than thirty percent of K-12 students who identify as Asian. The SCCOE is proud to partner with the Santa Clara County Office of Education [Asian American and Pacific Islander \(AAPI\) Educators Network](#) to develop this [Educator Toolkit: Understanding and Affirming our K-12 Asian American and Pacific Islander Students](#). This digital resource is intended to develop broader and deeper knowledge of the local AAPI history and community, and support teachers and administrators in the education and identity development of AAPI students in Santa Clara County. The content of this toolkit is aligned to the *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*.

In the 2021-22 school year, the SCCOE AAPI Educators' Network held a four-part series with a panel of speakers about each topic. The collective knowledge and cultural wealth shared by the lived experiences and reflection of the panelists built the content of this transformative curriculum presented in this digital toolkit.

This digital educator toolkit is a valuable resource as you plan services and supports for AAPI students and families in the upcoming academic year.

Sincerely,



**Mary Ann Dewan, Ph.D.**

County Superintendent of Schools

## Toolkit Sections

The table below provides a quick guide for educators to navigate the various sections of this digital toolkit.

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# Introduction



Understanding and Affirming  
our K-12

**ASIAN AMERICAN  
PACIFIC ISLANDER**

Students



## Purpose

The core purpose of this educator toolkit is to offer a point of entry for teachers, administrators, and other members of educational communities to engage in content to deepen the understanding of AAPI students and families. In response to increased incidents of anti-Asian violence, the Asian American and Pacific Islander Educator Network of the Santa Clara County Office of Education met over the course of the 2020-21 school year to write a statement of inclusion for AAPI students. The development of this toolkit grew out of the need for educators to better understand the AAPI demographic who makes up roughly one-third of the student body across Santa Clara County. To that end, the goal of the toolkit is to *lay a foundation* for the continuing design and development of AAPI focused curriculum that is coherent with the History and Social Science Standards as well as the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, which will be the focus of future work. Thus, the overarching objectives of this toolkit are:

- To prepare educators to teach AAPI students and within AAPI communities
- To develop shared understanding of who makes up the AAPI local community
- To build community and solidarity
- To gain understanding about shared and divergent histories and identities of AAPI groups
- To support the strong identity development of AAPI students
- To address the needs of AAPI school communities

## Connections to History-Social Science

The SCCOE History-Social Science Program values the lived experiences, identities, voices, and contributions of the AAPI community. The following resources support developing learning opportunities for students to deepen and expand their understanding and learning about AAPI history, culture, and identity.

- [HSS Framework Guiding Questions](#) (Organized By Grade Level)
- [Accelerated Learning for History Social Science](#) (Organized By Grade Level)
- [CDE Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Sample Lessons & Topics](#)
- [Content, Literacy, Inquiry, Content Project](#) - see “Specialized Topics” list
- [Cambodian Genocide, Hmong History & Cultural Studies, Vietnamese American Refugee Experience](#) SCCOE is proud to partner with the Orange County Department of Education on these model curriculum projects.

The History-Social Science Framework calls for K-12 civic education and engagement. SCCOE supports this shift through the [Power of Democracy Initiative](#) and the resources and professional learning opportunities provided by the SCCOE History-Social Science Program. The following resources support engaging students in taking action for positive change about issues they care about:

- [The California State Seal of Civic Engagement](#)
- Integrated Action Civics Project - [Change Analysis Activities](#)
- [C3 Framework](#)
- [SEL Youth Voice & Engagement](#)
- [Youth Voter Toolkit](#)

# Guiding Principles

**Vision**

- Acknowledging an interconnected history and shared humanity
- Cultivating a culture of belonging
- Building the engine to fuel the well-being of AAPI students in schools

## Goals

- Develop broader and deeper knowledge of the local Asian American and Pacific Islander history and community
- Support teachers and administrators in the education and identity development of Asian American and Pacific Islander students in Santa Clara County

- **Constructivist:** Co-exploring stories and experiences (questions are as important as facts)
- **Local:** Honoring the rich local histories, experiences, and knowledge held within the AAPI community across Santa Clara County
- **Non-hierarchical:** Leveraging knowledge and wisdom (expertise) from experience, practice, and reflection
- **Community-based:** Collecting and sharing resources that have been of use to community members
- **Transformative:** Building toward a truthful, additive, multidimensional, and humanizing curriculum

# What is the meaning of AAPI?

Like all racial categories, the label “Asian American Pacific Islander,” or “AAPI,” is a historical and social undertaking. The term “Asian American” was born during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

The [federal government](#) has used the term “Asian Pacific Islander” or “API” since the 1980s. In 2000 the US Census Bureau divided the category into “Asian Americans” and “Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders”. The federal government defines “Asian American” as people with origins in “any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent”. “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander” are those with origins in “any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands”.

As a Census category, changes in demographics are tracked, resources are afforded to people who are AAPI, especially when the racial category is leveraged by communities to advocate for such resources. This is to say that strength exists in numbers. However, the category “AAPI”, includes peoples who span over 50 ethnicities, far more languages and cultures, and even more reasons for coming to the United States. Great variance in socioeconomic status and levels of education exists. (For much more detail, see the June 2022 [“National State of AANHPIs Report”](#) by AAPI Data.) Thus, the label can be advantageous while diminishing differences. Therefore, while we use this term in our everyday language, when we start to scratch the surface, it is common that we begin to ask questions about this racial category: *“Why are ‘Asian American’ and ‘Pacific Islander’ a single student group category?”*

The category “Pacific Islander” was created as a way for Pacific Islanders to join a larger demographic. General agreement exists that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders should be two separate racial categories because their needs, geography, cultures and histories are different. The conjoining of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders often renders PIs invisible, since Pacific Islanders make up a small fraction of the percentage of the population that Asian Americans comprise. For example, in Santa Clara County, Pacific Islander students make up 0.4 percent of the student demographic, while Asian American students make up 34.2 percent. As the smaller group within the AAPI category, Pacific Islander students do not receive the attention they deserve.

## *Why is “Filipino” a separate student group category?*

In its reports, the California Department of Education lists “Filipino” as an aggregate student group separate from “Asian American” and “Pacific Islander” (see [this statement](#) from the CDE). Because they have to do with the historical and ongoing social processes of creating racial categories, the reasons for this separation are complex. As Omi and Espiritu ([2000](#)) explain, in the early 1900s the question existed around how to classify those immigrating from the Philippines on the Census as they were considered U.S. nationals due to the U.S. occupation of the Philippines.

Over time, racial and ethnic categories in general have shifted and morphed. During the 1980s, Filipino groups pushed to remain an aggregate group separate from Asian American because, as they argued, their socioeconomic status and educational levels qualified them for resources allocated through affirmative action policies where other Asian Americans would not qualify.

# K - 12 Student Demographic Data in Santa Clara County

### Santa Clara County Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity 2021-2022

Race	Number Enrolled	Percentage Enrolled
African American	4,367	1.8%
Am. Indian/Alaskan	680	0.3%
Asian	74,290	30.8%
Filipino	9,153	3.80%
Hispanic/Latino	94,847	39.3%
Pacific Islander	978	0.4%
White	40,906	17.0%
Two or More Races	13,706	5.7%
Unreported	2,399	1.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>241,326</b>	<b>100%</b>

[Breakdown of Student Enrollment by Santa Clara County Districts 2021-22](#)

Source: CDE, DataQuest 2021-22

### Santa Clara County by the Numbers 2021-2022

Districts	Total Enrollment	Number of Schools
31	241,326	410

### Student Groups 2021-2022

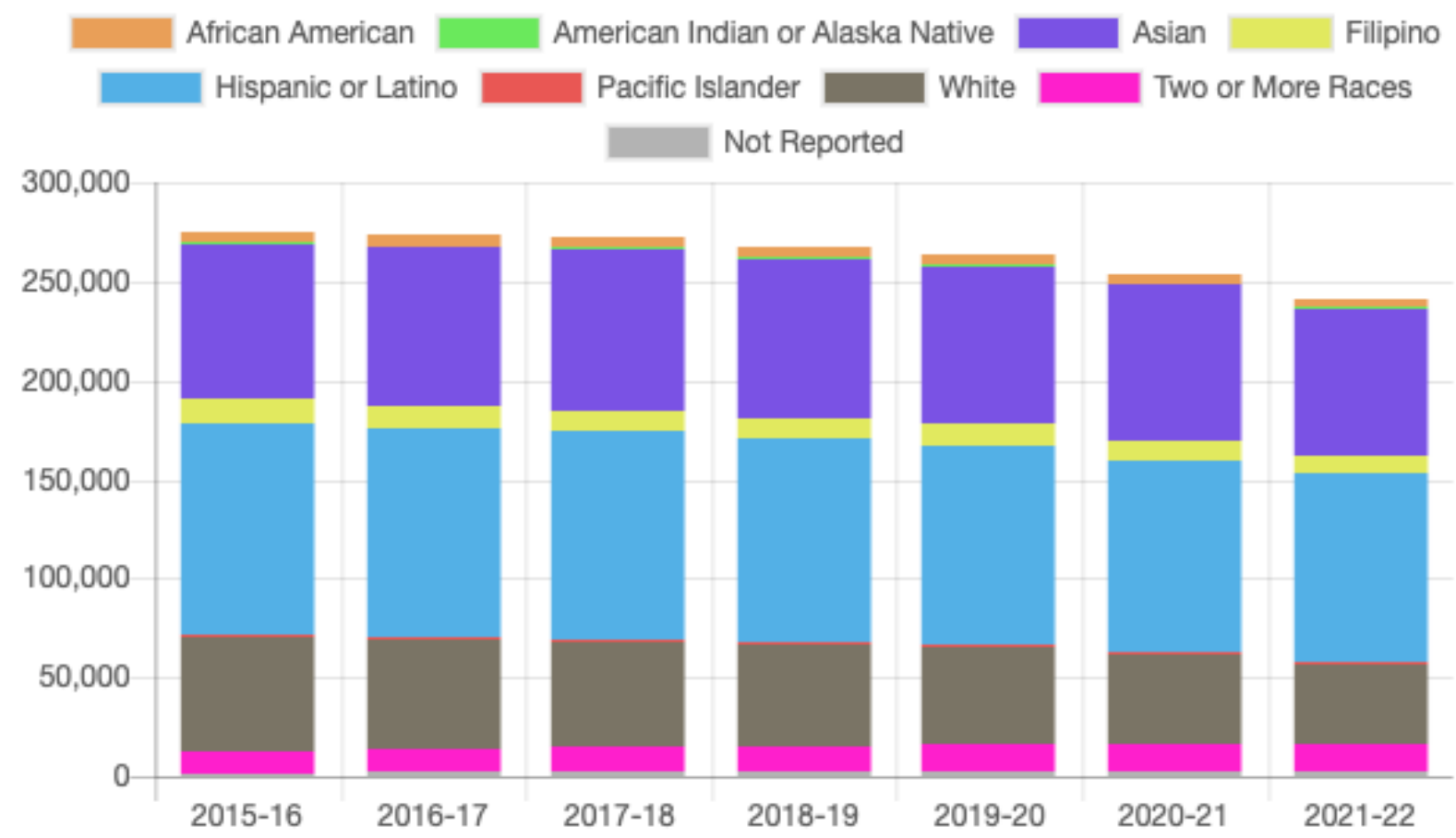
	Number of Students	%
Special Education	27,642	11.5%
Homeless	3,068	1.3%
Foster Youth	398	0.2%
Migrant	547	0.2%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	86,760	36.0%
English Learners	54,266	22.5%

Source: CDE, DataQuest 2021-22



# AAPI Demographic Data in Santa Clara County

### Santa Clara County Student Enrollment by Ethnicity



Enrollment Multi-Year Summary by Ethnicity in Santa Clara County

Source: CDE, DataQuest 2021-22

### SANTA CLARA COUNTY STAFF AND STUDENTS BY ETHNICITY

#### Teachers 2018-19

Level	Asian, Not Hispanic	Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic	Filipino, Not Hispanic	AAPI Total	Total
County	1,173	41	410	1,624 (12.5%)	13,048
State	17,867	925	4,708	23,500 (7.6%)	307,470

#### Certificated 2018-19

Level	Asian, Not Hispanic	Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic	Filipino, Not Hispanic	AAPI Total	Total
County	2,075	346	472	2,893 (18.9%)	15,306
State	20,938	5,851	1,110	27,899 (7.7%)	364,759

#### Administrators 2018-19

Level	Asian, Not Hispanic	Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic	Filipino, Not Hispanic	AAPI Total	Total
County	114	4	19	137 (13.3%)	1,030
State	1,196	87	323	1,606 (5.8%)	27,631

#### Pupil Services 2018-19

Level	Asian, Not Hispanic	Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic	Filipino, Not Hispanic	AAPI Total	Total
County	199	5	47	251 (18.5%)	1,354
State	2,070	113	861	3,044 (9.0%)	33,816

#### Student Enrollment 2018-19

Level	Asian, Not Hispanic	Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic	Filipino, Not Hispanic	AAPI Total	Total
County	80,632	1,207	10,556	92,395 (34.6%)	267,224
State	573,925	28,085	149,680	751,690 (12.2%)	6,186,278

SOURCE: California Department of Education - DataQuest  
Compiled by the Santa Clara County Office of Education, May 2021

\*2018-19 is the most recent data available.

# Section I

# Immigration and Diaspora



## Objectives:

- Understand how telling and learning stories about personal and family histories impact our work in schools
- Acknowledge an interconnected history and shared humanity

## Introduction

The Asian American Pacific Islander Educator Network kicked off its four-part series with a panel of speakers who spoke about their families' immigration stories. They shared what it means for them to think about this history as part of a global diaspora. In technical terms, "diaspora" is the movement, migration, or scattering of people from their ancestral homelands.

As the panelists spoke, they reminded us that diaspora is not only physical movement; understanding ourselves as part of a diaspora fills an emotional, psychological, and spiritual space. Individuals and families leave homelands and come to the United States for myriad reasons.

The panelists described in their talk that these reasons are deeply part of their identities. In addition -- and importantly -- these immigration stories are not only stories of individual people and families, they have much to teach us about international and U.S. politics and history, as well as our shared humanity.

# Panelists: Immigration & Diaspora

The Santa Clara County Office of Education and the AAPI Educators' Network appreciate the following community members for their contributions to this topic:

***A Vietnamese Refugee Family's Journey from Việt Nam to the South Bay***

**An Bùi**, Poet and Social Worker in Training



***Following the American Dream: A Filipino Diaspora***

**Sofia Fojas**, Arts Coordinator, Santa Clara County Office of Education



***AAPI: Plurality, Complexity, Nuance***

**Funie Hsu, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor of American Studies, San Jose State University



# Inquiry Questions & Reflection

**Inquiry Focus:**

1. What is your family's immigration story?
2. How do you understand that story in relation to broader Asian American and Pacific Islander history and/or identity?
3. If we are to promote Asian American and Pacific Islander studies as part of our public school curriculum, how should we think and teach about immigration and diaspora?

**Reflection:**

1. Why is the information you presented or discussed important for the K-12 community in Santa Clara County?
2. What are your top three takeaways from your talk, or things you want the community to know or understand?
3. What are 3-5 resources on the topic you shared that you think would be useful to the education community?

# Immigration and Diaspora: At-a-Glance

**A Vietnamese Refugee Family's Journey from Việt Nam to the South Bay**

**Following the American Dream: A Filipino Diaspora**

**AAPI: Plurality, Complexity, Nuance**

## Historical Context

In the 1970s, it was relatively new for the United Nations to help refugees emigrate, immigration policies were changing, and sponsorship was often needed.

The Filipino story is the American story. Filipinos were in the land that became the United States long before the colonies were in existence.

AAPI communities have been shaped by American political economic forces, such as US military interventions in Asia and immigration policies.

## Significance for K-12 Curriculum Development

It is important for the K-12 community because Asian American and Pacific Islander studies need to be incorporated in the curriculum now!

Digging more deeply into the history of United States colonization, one may see how intertwined the history of the Philippines is with that of the United States.

Unfortunately, many educators have the misperception that all AAPI students are high achievers and do not have educational or emotional needs.

## Main Concepts to Share with Students

Family history as well as political history are important history for students to learn so that they understand why they are here.

Filipinos are often seen as foreign outsiders. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Attention to plurality, complexity, and nuance is important in understanding the many contours of AAPI student lives.

## Voices from Local Community Members

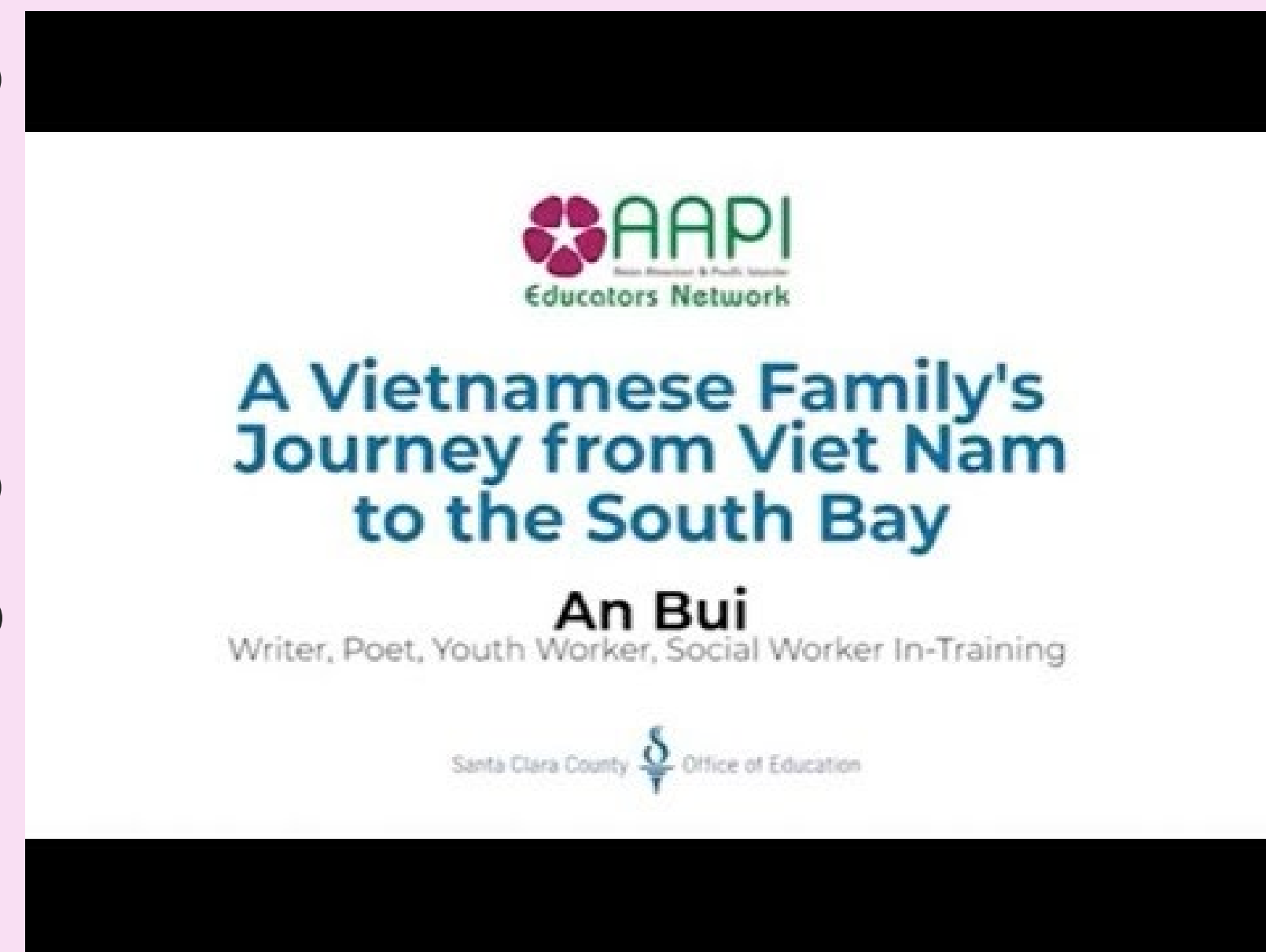
### An Bui

Poet and Social Worker in Training



An Bui is a poet, social worker in training, and water rooster who was born in Việt Nam and raised in San José. She earned a B.A. in English with a minor in Education Studies at UCLA, served in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, and partnered with youth in school and non-profit programs for 6 years. Through her writing, she navigates family dynamics, queer Catholic Vietnamese identity, and grief. Her work has been featured in Autostraddle, Kearny Street Workshop, and Essential Truths: The Bay Area in Color anthology. She is a member of the artist and healer collective, QTViệt Cafe Collective Circle. When she's not writing or performing, she's supporting youth and young adults in their wellness and career journeys, planting seeds for intergenerational healing within families.

## A Vietnamese Refugee Family's Journey from Việt Nam to the South Bay



## Main Takeaways



1. During this period of war and political conflicts, it was not easy for Asian refugees (i.e. Vietnamese, Laos, Hmong, Cambodian, and Korean) to emigrate to other countries. It was relatively new for the United Nations to help refugees emigrate, immigration policies were changing, and sponsorship was often needed.
1. My parents emigrated from Việt Nam to the United States for political stability and economic opportunity for my siblings and me, but it was very sad for them. They had to leave behind their elderly parents, the rest of their family, and everything they knew. It was uncertain when they would be able to return.
1. Growing up as a first generation Vietnamese American in a city with many other Vietnamese Americans was a blessing, but it would have been helpful to learn more Asian American and Pacific Islander studies with our classmates. This education may have supported us with the mental health and academic issues that came up as first generation students trying to juggle both Vietnamese and American culture.

## The Importance for the K-12 Community in Santa Clara County

It is important for the K-12 community because Asian American and Pacific Islander studies need to be incorporated in the curriculum now! Growing up, I was lucky to be surrounded by storytellers in my family, church community, and peer group who shared the Vietnamese refugee or diaspora experience with me.

However, outside of this, I barely learned about Vietnamese American or any other Asian American and Pacific Islander history in my education at all. It would have helped to learn more about this history growing up because it was hard to understand why I was here in the U.S. and not in Việt Nam, to navigate life as a first generation Vietnamese American, and to reconcile with the painful fact that if it was not for war, I could have grown up in my homeland.

## Voices from Local Community Members

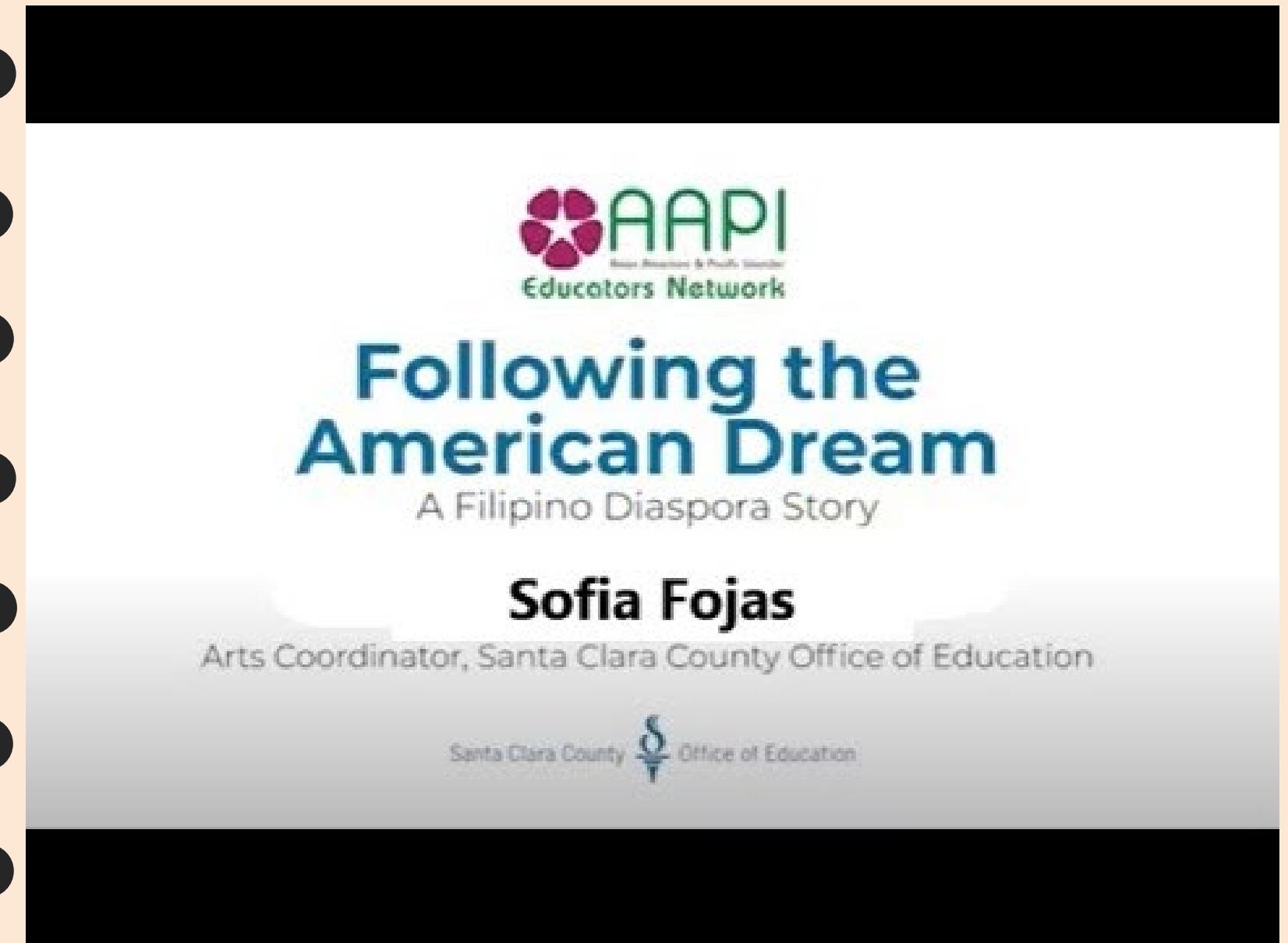
### Sofia Fojas

Arts Coordinator, Santa Clara County Office of Education



Sofia Fojas is a leader for cultural equity and social justice in the arts. She was born in Honolulu and grew up in San José. A classroom music teacher and high school music director for 20 years, she taught orchestra, band, IB Music, and mariachi. In the last 6 years she served as a district arts leader in San Francisco and Elk Grove school districts. Sofia is the Arts Coordinator for the Santa Clara County Office of Education in San José. She currently sits on the National Guild for Community arts Education board of directors and serves on its racial equity committee.

## Following the American Dream: A Filipino Diaspora



# Main Takeaways



# The Importance for the K-12 Community in Santa Clara County

- 1. My father emigrated to the United States by joining the military. In all of our stories, the military played a central role.
- 1. My father was from an educated, middle class family and was relegated to a lower status as a Filipino in the Navy, serving as a cook. His dream was to be successful in the United States. When he passed away all five of his daughters were college educated with advanced degrees, and he and my mother owned several properties. That brought him great joy.
- 1. The Filipino story is the American story. Filipinos were in the land that became the United States long before the colonies were in existence. Filipinos play a pivotal role in the success of this county.

The Filipino story is part of the history of the United States. Filipinos are often seen as foreign outsiders. Nothing could be further from the truth. Digging more deeply into the history of United States colonization, one may see how intertwined the history of the Philippines is with that of the United States.

Part of the education of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Educators' Network is to uncover the rich diversity of those groups who fall under the 'Asian' label. The Philippines is home to people speaking 187 languages with members of groups that share a common set of traditions, ancestry, culture, history, and other attributes. American Filipinx students should have the opportunity to have that rich diversity honored and respected in schools.



## Voices from Local Community Members

### Funie Hsu, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of American Studies, San Jose State University

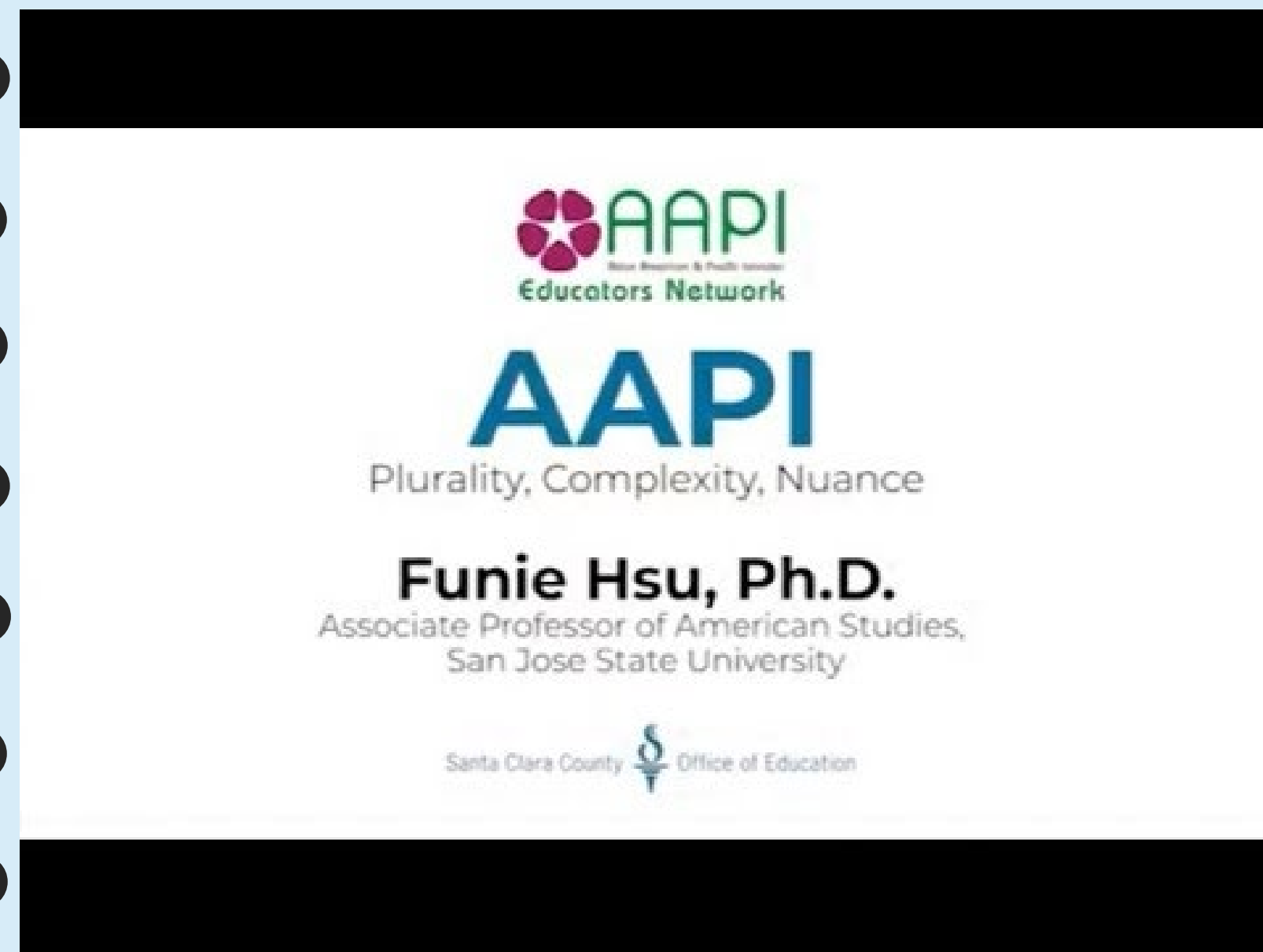


Funie Hsu, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of American studies at San José State University. She is an transdisciplinary scholar whose first book examines US colonialism in the Philippines, English instruction policy, and animality. Her second book project explores mindfulness, race, and schools.

Funie received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley in Education, her Ed.M. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and her B.A. from the University of California, Davis in Asian American Studies.

She is a Taiwanese American immigrant from a working class, Buddhist background.

## AAPI: Plurality, Complexity, Nuance



## Main Takeaways



1. AAPI students are a growing demographic in Santa Clara County. Unfortunately, many educators have the misperception that all AAPI students are high achievers and do not have educational or emotional needs. Stereotypes of the AAPI community continue to shape dominant behaviors towards AAPI communities and students, and these behaviors have historically led to exclusionary practices.
1. The information presented in the discussion helps to highlight the ways in which AAPI communities diverge from the stereotypical imagination of who we are, and helps to create a more informed approach to understanding the diverse experiences of AAPI students.
1. Specifically, in my discussion, I highlight how AAPI communities have been shaped by American political economic forces, such as US military interventions in Asia and immigration policies.

## The Importance for the K-12 Community in Santa Clara County

I centered my mini discussion on the three ideas of plurality, complexity, and nuance. Keeping these concepts in mind can help educators understand that within the AAPI group, individuals within ethnic groups can represent incredibly divergent backgrounds and experiences. The AAPI group is composed of many different ethnicities and cultures due to the construction of the category, and oftentimes there is a focus on emphasizing similarities across and within groups.

While similarities can definitely be helpful in understanding general trends, such as historical events, that have shaped the lives of AAPI students, an attention to plurality, complexity, and nuance is also important in understanding the many contours of AAPI student lives. Focusing on these three dimensions also illuminates how other socially constructed dimensions of difference, such as class, gender, religious affiliation, etc., impact AAPI experiences in distinct ways.

# Connie Young Yu

Historian, Author and Lecturer

## A Story from a Descendent of Chinese Railroad Workers

Santa Clara County Office of Education

AAPI  
Asian American & Pacific Islander  
Educators Network

## A Story from a Descendent of Chinese Railroad Workers

Connie Young Yu  
Writer, Historian, and Lecturer

Equity • Diversity • Inclusion • Partnership

### Additional Resources

#### Books

*Voices from the Railroad: Stories by Descendants of Chinese Railroad Workers*, edited by Sue Lee and Connie Young Yu, 2nd edition, 2021, Chinese Historical Society of America

*Chinatown, San Jose, USA*, by Connie Young Yu, 4th edition, 2010. History/San Jose

#### Resolution

[Resolution City of San Jose to Chinese Immigrants and Descendants.pdf](#)

#### Videos

*Digging to Chinatown*, video documentary on San Jose's Chinatowns, by Barre Fong and Connie Young Yu, available on Vimeo.

#### Websites

Chinese Railroad Workers In North America Project at Stanford University

<https://west.stanford.edu/researchhistory-arts-and-culture/chinese-railroad-workers-north-america-project>

# Section II



## Local Geography: Physical and Community Spaces

**Objective:** Understand history of local places and their significance to the development of cultural identities and empowerment.

### Local Geographies: Spaces and Places

While spaces constitute the physical location or geographies, places are what gives a space meaning. In this section, we will focus on community spaces that have become significant sites for local AAPI communities. A space offers us connection to culture or identity; it is both the present experience of a place, and it is past memories. A place is alive with social and political practice; it is the culturally ascribed meaning given to a space.

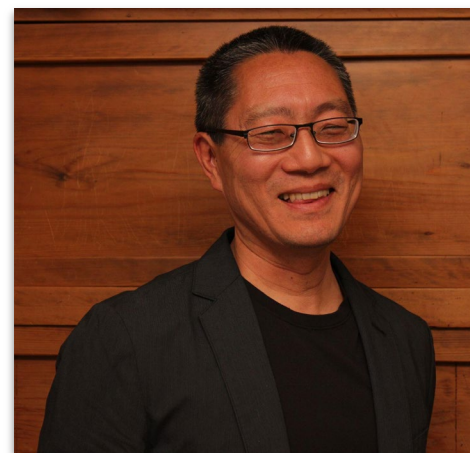
This section will introduce three community spaces in Santa Clara County.

- Japantown/Chinatown/Pinoytown
- Little Saigon
- Sikh Gurdwara

The Santa Clara County Office of Education and the AAPI Educators' Network appreciate the following community members for their contributions to this topic:

***Exploring a Sense of Place: Community and Identity Building through Local History and Augmented Reality Art***

**Tom Izu**, Co-Director, Hidden Histories of San Jose Japantown Project; Immediate Past Executive Director, California History Center, De Anza College



***The Little Saigon Project***

**Van Le**, School Board President, East Side Union High School District



***Sikh Gurdwara San Jose and its Significance for the Sikh and Other Bay Area Communities***

**Gurinder Pal Singh, Ph.D.**, Vice President, Sikh Gurdwara, San Jose, CA



# Inquiry Questions & Reflection

## Inquiry Focus

1. Tell us a little about the history of the space. (How it came into existence, how it may have changed over time, any conflict that has arisen over its existence, etc.)
2. Tell us about why this space is and has been important to you. Tell us about why this space is important to your community. Please share an example that demonstrates this importance.
3. If you were to teach about this space to a class of 5<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> graders, what three main concepts or pieces of information would you want them to understand from the lesson?

## Reflection

1. Why is the information you presented or discussed important for the K-12 community in Santa Clara County?
2. What are your top three takeaways from your talk, or things you want the community to know or understand?
3. What are 3-5 resources on the topic you shared that you think would be useful to the education community?

# Santa Clara County Local Geography: At-a-Glance

Intro

Immigration & Diaspora

Japantown/Chinatown/Pinoytown, San Jose

Little Saigon, San Jose

Sikh Gurdwara, San Jose

## History of the Space

The area currently known as Japantown in San Jose has also been a Chinatown and a Pinoytown.

Little Saigon is a neighborhood located on Story Road in East San Jose. San Jose has more Vietnamese residents than any single city outside of Vietnam.

In the 1980s the Sikh population increased rapidly in Santa Clara County. Sikh Gurdwara San Jose was founded in 1985. Despite not having a building, they met every Sunday in a community center to pray together.

## Significance of this Space

The changing meanings of the area currently known as Japantown is essential for students to comprehend so that they can develop a sense of place.

Little Saigon offers a place of community and a remembrance of history for Vietnamese immigrants and their families.

Sikh Gurdwara San Jose is the largest place of worship for Sikhs in North America and represents the aspirations of the Sikhs and challenges they face in the Santa Clara County. The Gurdwara was advocated for by the Sikh people in the local area. It is a place of commune for all, and it is also a place of spirituality and education for the Sikh community.

## Main Concepts to Share with Students

Japantown is an example of just one interesting and relevant placed-based AAPI “hidden histories”. Many more are waiting to be discovered throughout Santa Clara County.

Little Saigon in San Jose reminds students about the Vietnam War, the Fall of Saigon, and the reasons why Vietnamese-Americans live in the U.S.

The values of compassion, truthfulness, hard work, caring for nature, respect for all faiths and helping those in need as practiced by the Sikhs at the Gurdwara San Jose are important building blocks for a healthy and progressive society.

Local Geography

Education & Pacific Islanders

Identity

Resources

# Japantown Chinatown Pinoytown



## Background:

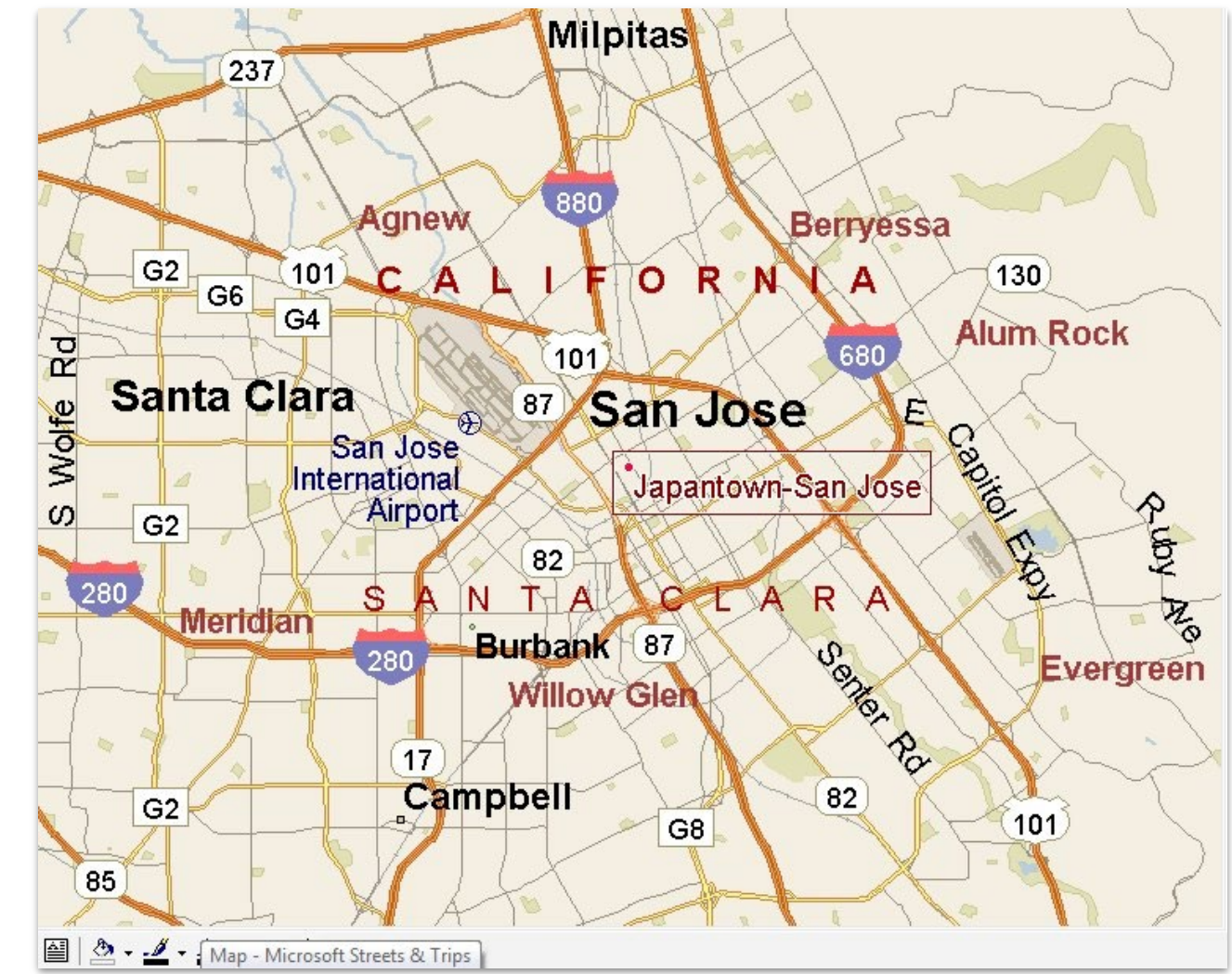
- The neighborhood currently known as Japantown - North Fifth and Jackson streets (from the early 1900s) in San Jose has also been a Chinatown (Heinlenville 1880 - 1930) and a Pinoytown (from the 1930s).
- Japantown, Heinlenville Chinatown, and Pinoytown were places where people from these communities were segregated as a consequence of structural racism in the greater Santa Clara County area.
- People of Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese descent resided together peacefully. There are no documented accounts of inter-ethnic conflict. Even so, intermarriage among these groups was also very rare.

**AAPI**  
Asian American & Pacific Islander  
Educators Network

**Exploring a Sense of Place:  
Community and Identity Building through  
Local History and Augmented Reality Art**

**Tom Izu**  
Co-Director,  
Hidden Histories of San Jose Japantown Project  
Immediate Past Executive Director  
California History Center, De Anza College

Santa Clara County Office of Education



# Significance for Santa Clara County Students

- **Creating a sense of place is key for understanding a community:**

It is crucial for students of all ages to develop a sense of place. This means experiencing a place by visiting and observing it, and being aware of their feelings. It also means listening to oral histories or storytelling presentations by people who represent different aspects of the place as a historical community. Students can then “feel” the changes the place has undergone and see traces of it everywhere. They can then begin to imagine where the place as a community is headed and start to wonder what might happen to it and how they feel about what they are beginning to imagine.

- **Developing a “historical imagination” is key for understanding the lessons of history:**

Once students develop a sense of place and an understanding of community, critical reflection is needed. This involves absorbing what has been gathered and felt by engaging in a creative, imaginative activity in collaboration with their peers. This could include artistic, political or social organizing-based projects, or anything else one can imagine, as long as it draws a story from the history they have discovered. It also needs to be tied to a sense of “building” something tangible and recognizable by those in the community, as well as something that engenders feelings of worth and social value by those doing the work. This turns the history learned about a place into something students can actually “feel” and “see”. They can then begin to understand on a deep level, the story or lesson behind it.



- **Experimenting with an immersive and experiential approach to learning is a good thing:**

This approach helps students create an emotional grounding needed to absorb abstract concepts taught through -traditional standard history and social sciences approaches. It can be useful in helping students develop a strong, healthy identity, by connecting them to a place and community. This connection can serve as a source of comfort and support for students, while providing a sense of belonging that can last a lifetime.

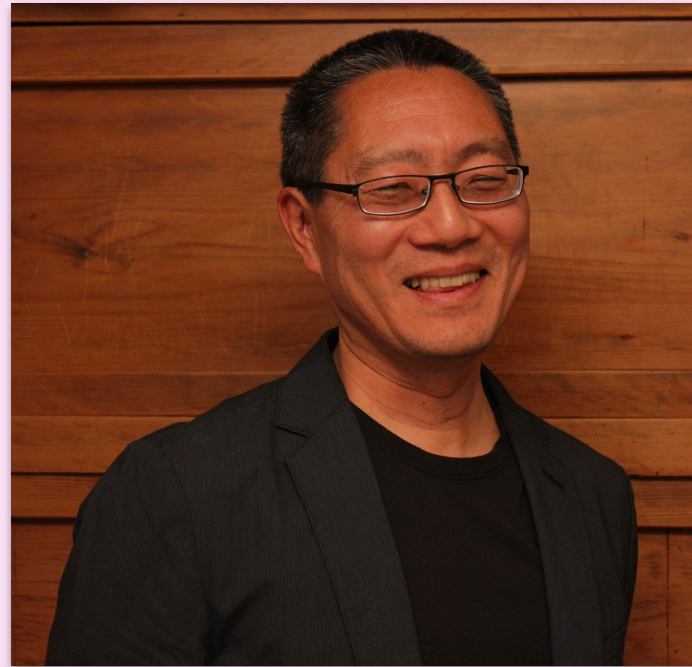




## Voices from Local Community Members

### Japantown, Chinatown, Pinoytown:

Exploring a Sense of Place: Community and Identity Building through Local History and Augmented Reality Art



**Tom Izu**

Co-Director, Hidden Histories of San Jose Japantown Project

**Tom Izu** is the immediate past Executive Director of the California History Center at De Anza College. For 24 years he directed its work in promoting local, regional and state history through publications, exhibits, oral history projects and courses, while operation of a research library and archives. During his tenure with the center he launched a civil liberties project inspired by the lessons learned from the World War II experience of Japanese Americans. He continues to serve its board as an advisor.

## The Importance for the K-12 Community in Santa Clara County

I hope that my personal story of discovery and description of what inspired me to create the project I am currently involved in (Hidden Histories of San Jose Japantown) will give educators and students ideas for creating interesting and relevant place-based projects to find more API “hidden histories” that are waiting to be discovered. Some are hidden and almost completely lost, while others remain hiding in plain sight. All that is needed is some curiosity, imagination, and critical reflection, to uncover these stories of local AAPI presence.

If we do not provide opportunities for this process of discovery, then students will never feel that they fully *belong* here and that this is *their* place just as much as it is anyone else’s. Without these stories we cannot help them build the connections they need to overcome the forces of assimilation, acculturation, and white supremacy that make them feel that they are outsiders, when in fact, they are full members of our society and have much to give to the world.

### Main Takeaways

- The area currently known as Japantown in San Jose has also been a Chinatown and a Pinoytown.
- Changes of this area is essential for students to comprehend so that they can develop a sense of place.
- Japantown is an example of just one interesting and relevant place-based AAPI “hidden histories”. Many more are waiting to be discovered throughout Santa Clara County.

# Little Saigon



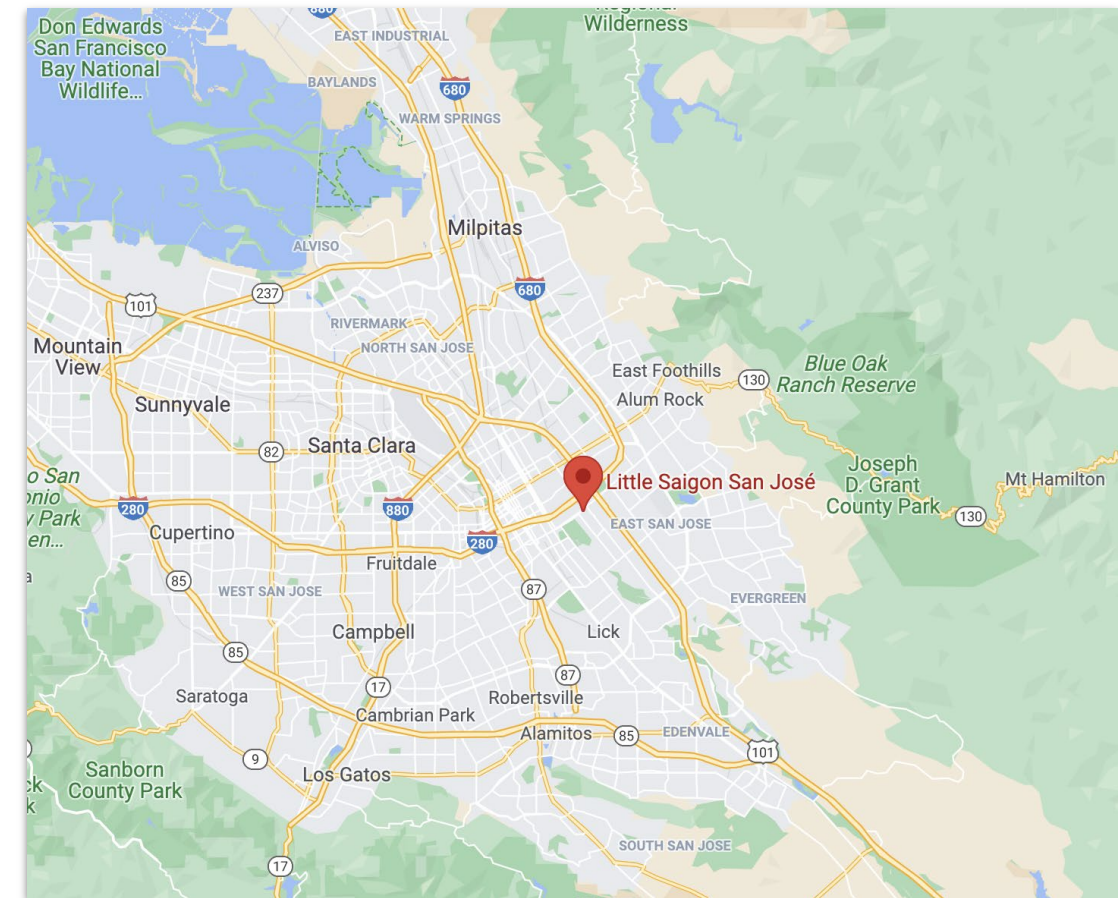
## The Little Saigon Project

**Van Le**  
Board President,  
East Side Union High School District



### Background:

- Little Saigon is a neighborhood located on Story Road in East San Jose.
- San Jose is home to more than 180,000 Vietnamese residents, making up more than 10% of the city population. (2020 U.S. Census)
- San Jose has more Vietnamese residents than any single city outside of Vietnam.
- In 2007, the Little Saigon district was officially created and recognized by the City of San José.



## Voices from Local Community Members

### The Little Saigon Project



**Van Le**  
Board President  
East Side Union High School District

As a refugee who worked hard to overcome many barriers, Van Le dedicates her life to serving her community, especially immigrants and refugees' families. She actively serves as a board member of many organizations that support immigrants, homeless students, and women suffering from domestic abuse. In addition, she has served as a board of trustee for East Side Union High School District since 2010 and was selected as Board president in 2015 and 2021. She works diligently with all stakeholders to support the district's vision of creating equitable school communities that welcome and support students as who they are.

## The Importance for the K-12 Community in Santa Clara County

Little Saigon is a neighborhood located on Story Road in East San Jose, California.

San Jose is home to more than 180,000 Vietnamese residents, making up more than 10% of the city population. (2020 U.S.Census)

In 2007, the Little Saigon district was officially created and recognized by the City of San José.

The city council's initial refusal to name the district Little Saigon prompted protests and a hunger strike at San Jose City Hall by an activist.

### Main Takeaways

- Little Saigon is a neighborhood located on Story Road in East San Jose, California. San Jose has more Vietnamese residents than any single city outside of Vietnam.
- San Jose has more Vietnamese residents than any single city outside of Vietnam. Little Saigon offers a place of community and a remembrance of history for Vietnamese immigrants and their families.
- Little Saigon in San Jose reminds students about of the Vietnam War, the Fall of Saigon, and the reasons why Vietnamese-Americans live in the U.S.

# Significance for Santa Clara County Students

- Little Saigon in San Jose reminds students about of the Vietnam War, the Fall of Saigon, and the reasons why Vietnamese-Americans exist in the U.S.
- Students need to know their family history to appreciate the contributions of their family members.
- Students can appreciate the history of their roots and the cultural values that are passed down to them from their elders.



# Sikh Gurdwara



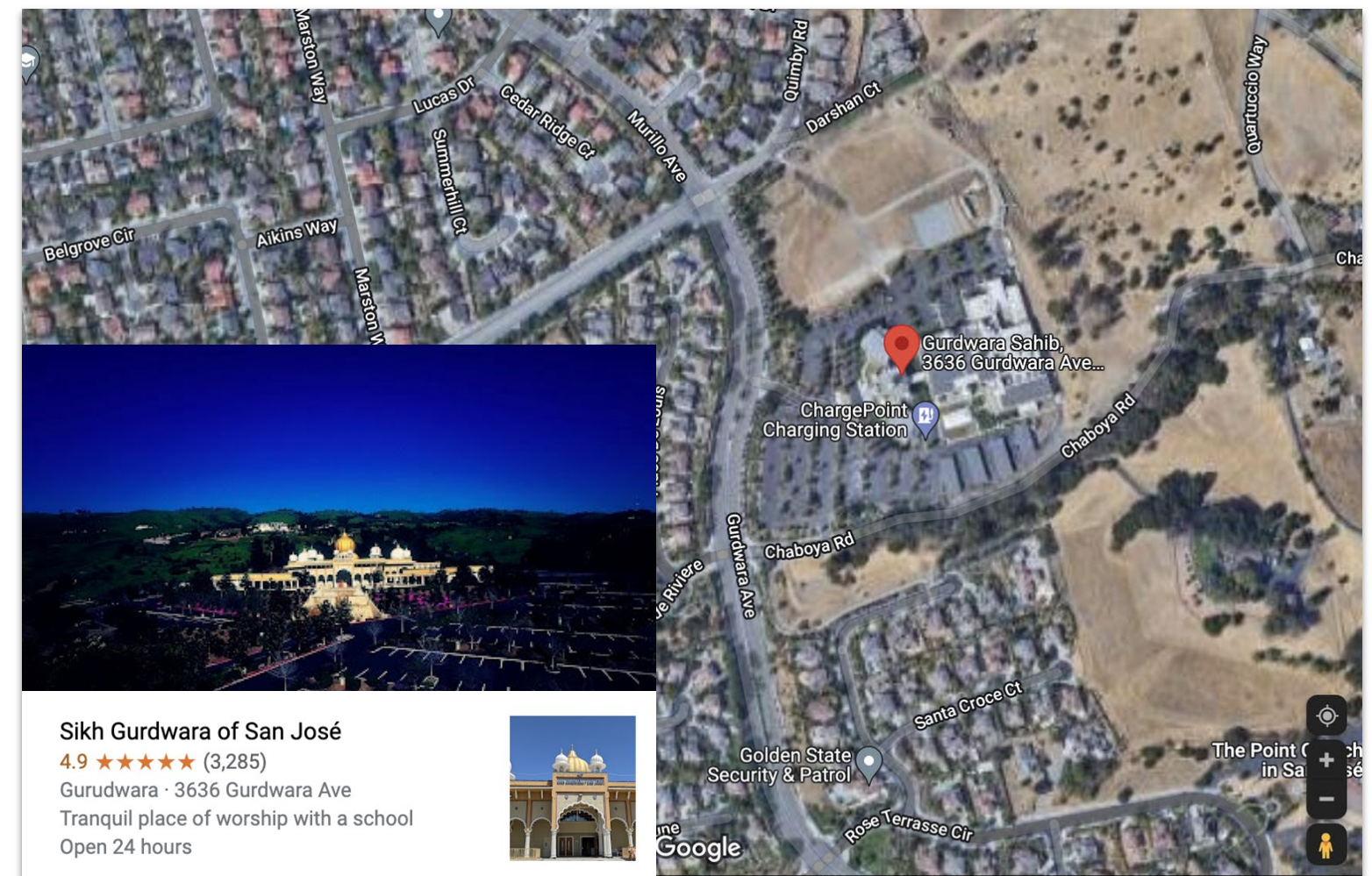
## Sikh Gurdwara San Jose and its Significance for the Sikh and Other Bay Area Communities

**Dr. Gurinder Pal Singh**  
Vice President,  
Sikh Gurdwara, San Jose, CA

Santa Clara County Office of Education

### Background:

- Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world. There are over 700,000 Sikhs in the USA.
- The Sikh Gurdwara of San Jose is located at 3636 Gurdwara Avenue, San Jose. CA 95148.
- The Sikh Gurdwara is open to all, providing free vegetarian meals in honor of the *langar* (free community kitchen) tradition.
- Over 700 children attend the school at the Sikh Gurdwara of San Jose.



## Voices from Local Community Members

### Sikh Gurdwara



**Gurinder Pal Singh, Ph.D.**  
Vice President, Sikh Gurdwara  
San Jose, CA

Gurinder Pal Singh, Ph.D. is Vice President of Sikh Gurdwara San Jose. His focus is the religious education of young children; to instill in them the Sikh values of compassion, truthfulness, and hard work. He participates in interfaith meetings and conferences on Sikhism. He is also working with other organizations to raise funds for scholarships for poor students in India.

He holds a Ph.D degree in physics and has worked as scientist/engineer at Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai, India; Max Planck institute in Stuttgart, Germany; IBM, Hitachi and Western Digital in Silicon Valley. He retired as a principal engineer from Western Digital in 2013.

## The Importance for the K-12 Community in Santa Clara County

Sikh Gurdwara San Jose, being the largest place of worship for Sikhs in North America, represents the aspirations of the Sikhs and challenges they face in the Santa Clara County. The Sikh Gurdwara of San Jose was founded in 1985. With no building, it had a modest beginning. Still, people came together every Sunday in a community center to pray. In 1996 the Sikh congregation bought the present site, but soon after there was opposition by some people in the Evergreen neighborhood, citing traffic, obstruction to their view, and “fear of the unknown.” The Sikh community responded with open houses where they held informational sessions to help people understand the purpose of the Gurdwara and more about the Sikh people. For the well-being of our society, it is important that all communities can live harmoniously without fear and contribute their best to the progress of all.

### Main Takeaways

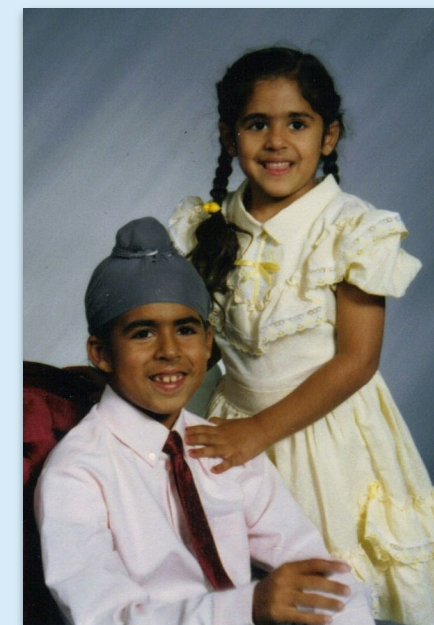
- The Sikh population increased rapidly in Santa Clara County during the 1980s. Sikh Gurdwara San Jose was founded in 1985.
- Sikh Gurdwara San Jose is the largest place of worship for Sikhs in North America and represents the aspirations of the Sikhs and challenges they face in the Santa Clara County. The Gurdwara was advocated for by the Sikh people in the local area.
- The values of compassion, truthfulness, hard work, caring for nature, respect for all faiths and helping those in need as practiced by the Sikhs at the Gurdwara San Jose are important building blocks for a healthy and progressive society.

# Significance for Santa Clara County Students

- To prepare students as global citizens, the K-12 education community needs to teach students about various religions and cultures. A survey conducted by Stanford University found that over 80% of Americans have little to no knowledge at Sikh people. Lack of knowledge leads to doubts and misinformation being spread about Sikhs. Sikhs have been bullied, harassed and their Gurdwaras attacked.
- Students are the voting citizens of tomorrow. It is important that they learn about minority immigrant communities so that they can combat misinformation and welcome immigrants with compassion as equals. The challenges Sikhs faced in getting the Gurdwara building approved is a good case study for advocacy.



- Due to the differences in cultural tradition and their appearance, many Sikh children are being bullied at school. The bullying and harassment Sikh children face in schools affects their academic performance and mental wellbeing adversely. Sikh children should be encouraged to speak about their identity. All students should be inspired to respect and learn about diverse traditions.
- It is important that teachers and students are well informed about the Sikh traditions as well as the positive role they are playing in the society through Gurdwara.



Tejinder and Lilly Singh

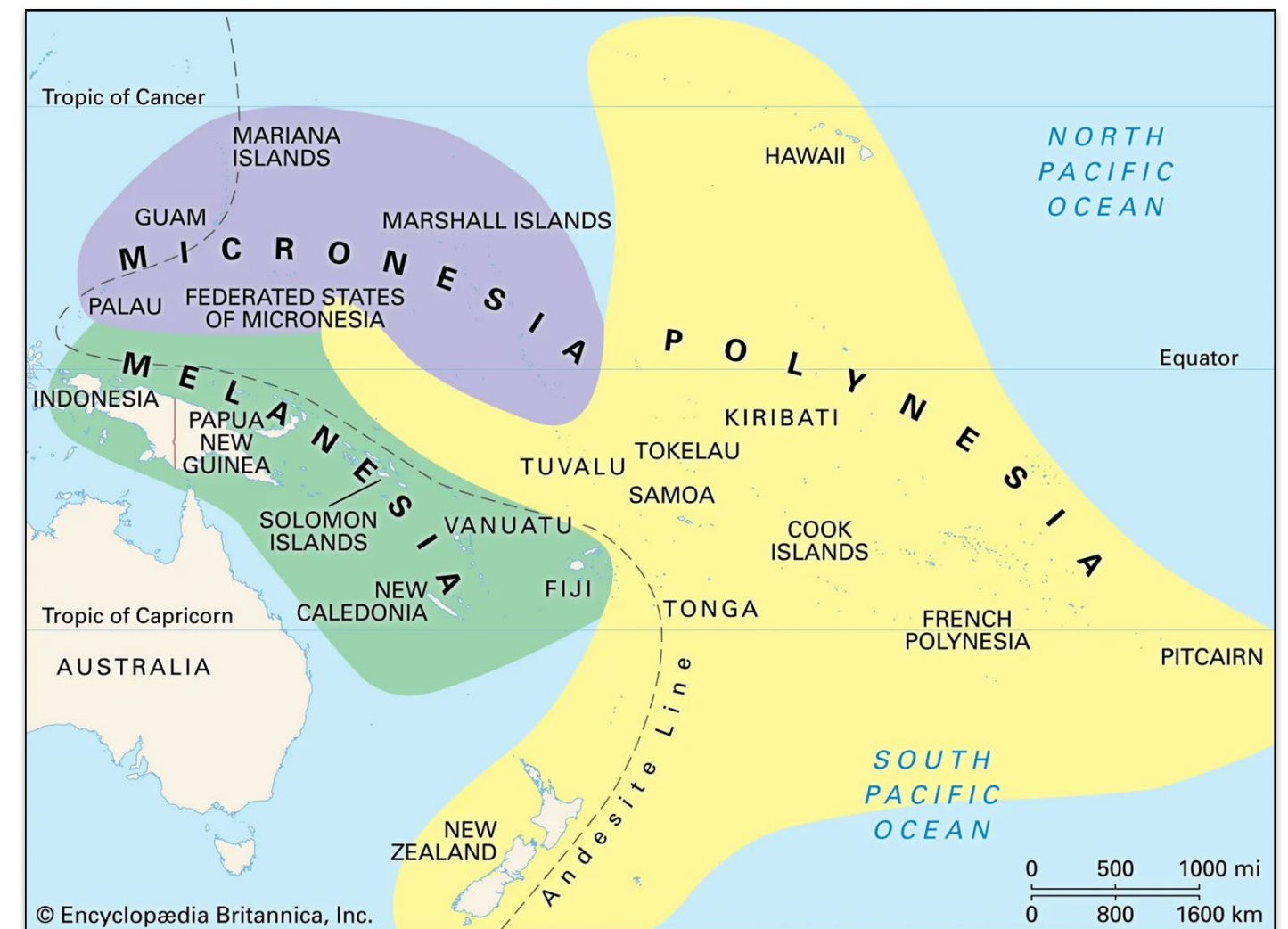
# Section III



## Education and Pacific Islanders: Sustaining Community and Culture

### Objectives:

- Gain deeper understanding of Pacific Islander experiences with the education system
- Gain deeper understanding of Pacific Islander educational aspirations and how non-Pacific Islanders can support their communities
- Gain better understanding of Pacific Islander cultural identities





## Students Who are identified as Pacific Islanders in Santa Clara County

Students who are Pacific Islander make up 0.4% of the student population in Santa Clara County and 0.4% across California. The term “Pacific Islander” refers to a group of people who are the original peoples of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia. Polynesia includes Hawaii (Native Hawaiian), Samoa (Samoan), American Samoa (Samoan), Tokelau (Tokelauan), Tahiti (Tahitian), and Tonga (Tongan). Micronesia includes Guam (Guamanian or Chamorro), Mariana Islands (Mariana Islander), Saipan (Saipanese), Palau (Palauan), Yap (Yapanese), Chuuk (Chuukese), Pohnpei (Pohnpeian), Kosrae (Kosraean), Marshall Islands (Marshallese), and Kiribati (I-Kiribat). Melanesia includes Fiji (Fijian), Papua New Guinea (Papua New Guinean), Solomon Islands (Solomon Islander), and Vanuatu (Ni-Vanuatu). While the population of students who are Pacific Islander is small in number, it is clearly diverse. The lessons we learn from Pacific Islander community members shed light on systemic inequities in the education system and offer insight into what can be done to address them.

## Inquiry Questions

1. What does a good education for your community mean to you?
1. How has your community worked to ensure that your young people receive the education and support they deserve?
1. What have been your educational successes? What are the best ways to support your community?



# Panelists: Sustaining Community and Culture

Moderated by: **Sofia Fojas**



Sofia Fojas is a leader for cultural equity and social justice in the arts. She was born in Honolulu and grew up in San José. A classroom music teacher and high school music director for 20 years, she taught orchestra, band, IB Music, and mariachi. In the last 6 years she served as a district arts leader in San Francisco and Elk Grove school districts. Sofia is the Arts Coordinator for the Santa Clara County Office of Education in San José. She currently sits on the National Guild for Community arts Education board of directors and serves on its racial equity committee.



## Daniel Naha-Veevalu

Samoan Community Development Center

Daniel “DannyBoy” Naha-Ve'evalu was born and raised in the Bay Area and has recently moved back after being gone for 10 years.

DannyBoy had moved to Atlanta, GA to

attend the Art Institute of Atlanta where he studied video production. After 2 years, he applied to the University of Southern California (USC) and was admitted Fall of 2009 into the School of Cinematic Arts and majored in Critical Studies of Film & Television. In 2013, DannyBoy graduated with his bachelor's degree. While in college, DannyBoy was a student organizer for a Pacific Islander initiative called Promoting Unity, Liberation and Education or PULE (pooh-leh) that he created while working with Asian Pacific American Student Services, a department of Student Affairs at USC.

After graduation, DannyBoy worked for Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC) as the Program Coordinator for Pacific Islander Leaders of Tomorrow, a culture-based and community-focused leadership development program designed to build the leadership within the Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (NHPI) community. After 4 years, DannyBoy decided to move back to the Bay Area to help take care of his family and worked for The Office of Diversity and Equity in San Mateo County as the NHPI Community Outreach Worker in a limited term position for 3 years. Currently, DannyBoy serves as the Program Manager for the Pasifika United Collaborative at The Samoan Community Development Center in San Francisco. DannyBoy recently found a strong sense of solace in his identity as a Queer Pacific Islander-Sāmoan-American male, a battle he has struggled with for a lifetime.



## John Iesha Ena

Program Coordinator, Samoan Community Development Center in San Francisco

Talofa, my name is John Iesha Ena, and I am currently the Director of Programs at the Samoan Community Development Center (SCDC). I am a trans-female Samoan working at SCDC for 19 years; making 20 years March 4, 2022. Starting at SCDC as a youth program coordinator then the Program Manager to where I am now. I had the honor of creating Polynesian support groups in the high schools, middle schools and elementary schools with the most at-risk Samoan and PI youth in SFUSD; and bringing in indigenous practices to support our at-risk youth. I have also had the honor of building up our youth program Pacific Islander Youth Alliance; and is the biggest program in our office. From this program, we were able to create 2 other youth programs to further provide our Samoan and PI youth with culturally relevant support. Being a part of this great family at SCDC has provided me with much personal growth and spirituality as well.



## Kanani Toni Densing

Hula Halau 'O Pi'ilani, Sunnyvale

Kumu Kanani has continued her late mom, Kumuhula Auntie Linda Pi'ilani Danek's legacy by continuing the Hālau and sharing its teachings. She participates in most local and out of state cultural events and hula competitions. She is creative and continues to delight audiences with her choreography that allows everyone to experience Hawai'i through the many chants and songs. She sings, plays Ukulele and chants all her own Mele. Kumu Kanani Densing began her formal hula training at the young age of 12 under Loea Naomi Kalama and later studied under Ehulani Lum where she became an Alaka'i. She has extensive training in many private workshops with notable and distinguished Kumu Hula. She has been teaching at Hula Halau 'O Pi'ilani in the Sunnyvale area for over 35+ years. She has begun to train her daughters, Sam Kaleleonalani and Ashley Puamelia to continue the family legacy. They are already leaders in the Hālau. They assist in teaching all classes by doing basics, chanting and singing. Her husband is also a musician for the Hālau but began as a Kane Hula dancer. Stop by the Hālau for a visit and begin your hula journey. The Hālau is located at 475 N. Wolfe Road, Sunnyvale, California.



## Kawika Alfiche

kumu hula of te Halau o Keikiali'i

Kumu Hula Kawika Keikiali'ihiwahiwa Alfiche has been teaching hula and Hawaiian cultural arts for 29 years. Kawika is the Kumu Hula (Master

teacher) for Hālau o Keikiali'i, and Director for the Kaululehua Hawaiian Cultural Center in South San Francisco & Napa. With a mission to preserve and perpetuate all things Hawaiian, Kawika spends his life learning, teaching and sharing his culture through the hula and cultural arts and teaches throughout the Globe.

Kawika has had impeccable training from his Nā Kumu. His first Kumu Hula was Tiare Maka-Olanolan Clifford of Hanalei, Kaua'i. After her passing in 1992, Kumu Kawika became haumana of Kumu Hula Harriet Kahalepoli Keahilihau-Spalding of Keaukaha, Hawai'i who had Kawika open Hālau in 1994. Aunty Harriet's kumu was her grandmother, Mary Ahi'eha Kekuewa, who was affectionately known as Mama Fuji'i. In 1996, Aunty Harriet had Kawika fall under Kumu Hula Rae Kahikilaulani Fonseca of Hilo, Hawai'i who is an `uniki (formal graduate) of Uncle George Lanakilakekiahiali'i Na`ope, hula master and treasure of Hawai'i. In March 2007, Kumu Kāwika was one of six to be a part of Kumu Rae's first and only `uniki.

Kumu Kawika is also a composer and recording artist with 4 cd's, Nālei (2005), Kale`a (2011), Nā Mele Kahiko (2013), White Ships (2015) and 5 dvd's Nānā I Ke Kumu (2010), Hula Pahu (2012) and Ho`okupu (2014), Hilo Hanakahi (2016) and Mohala (2020). Currently he is in the studio recording a 5th cd due in 2022.



## Leebo Pomele

Specialist, Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services, Youth Intervention Services

I was born in American Samoa, and my parents worked and saved all their earnings to bring us to America for a better education and a bright future. Unfortunately, it didn't quite work out as they had planned. My father passed away when I was only 11 years old, so as a teenager, I began to engage and choose another path in life. I dropped out of high school as a freshman and decided to get involved with the street lifestyle. And, from there everything went downhill, but to make a long story short. At the age of 35, I decided to enroll back in school and pursue an MPA degree in Sociology/Criminal Justice. Honestly, it wasn't easy, but it was worth it!!! I am currently working with the City of San Jose with the Youth Intervention Programs to help the disadvantaged, gang impacted youth and adults to find their purpose in life

# At-a-Glance:

*The education system has done a lot more to fail us than to support us. We need to understand how we can all work together to ensure that PIs are at the table to have conversations about education, and when events happen, PIs need to be there to help plan them. (Danny Naha-Veevalu)*

**What does a good education for your community mean to you?**

**How has your community worked to ensure that your young people receive the education and support they deserve?**

**What have been your educational successes? What are the best ways to support your community?**

**John iesha Ena:** A good education gives access to all communities, not only those with larger representation.

**John iesha Ena:** At the Samoan Community Development Center, there are many staff members dedicated to the education component. There are social workers and case managers in the schools who provide culturally relevant workshops, which tie into indigenous practices because that brings wellness.

**John iesha Ena:** A lot of the success of Samoan Community Development Center (SCDC) has been because they have pushed higher education, helping PI youth to see the opportunities in front of them. Samoan culture is based on elders, seeking deep thinking from the elders, and elders as guides to move the community forward. Many youth go to college and return to SCDC -- 17/32 program current staff went through SCDC programs.

**Leebo Pomele:** When I was growing up, anything having to do with Pacific Islanders in schooling was non-existent. The first thing that needs to be known for Pacific Islander students is that we are here. Recognizing and understanding who we are as people – for ourselves – is where we need to start.

**Leebo Pomele:** We need more opportunities to come together and talk so that we can share resources to be more effective in helping our parents, our culture to rise up.

**Leebo Pomele:** Education took me out of gangs, took me off the street. I learned that you can be successful and still love your culture.

**Kanani Toni Densing:** Having someone share their knowledge, something that is true, with all who want to learn and share.

**Kanani Toni Densing:** I help my students learn discipline. I tell them, “Don’t just go to class, go home and forget all that I taught you. Go home and practice all that I taught you.”

**Kawika Alfiche:** What I learned growing up was to be Hawaiian was bad luck, to be Hawaiian and do Hawaiian things was not a good thing. I’m still reconciling all of this, but what I do realize is that I’m trying to catch people who are putting away anything Hawaiian and to make it a part of their life because I have a life because of my Hawaiianness. I have a life and a purpose in life because of being Hawaiian.

**Danny Naha-Veevalu:** Oftentimes the PI community is not recognized for its intelligence or brilliance. There’s been a loss of understanding who our ancestors were. A lot of folks in the community are reviving this idea by teaching the youth that we come from master navigators, master weavers, folks who had community with other island nations as well as those here on the continent.

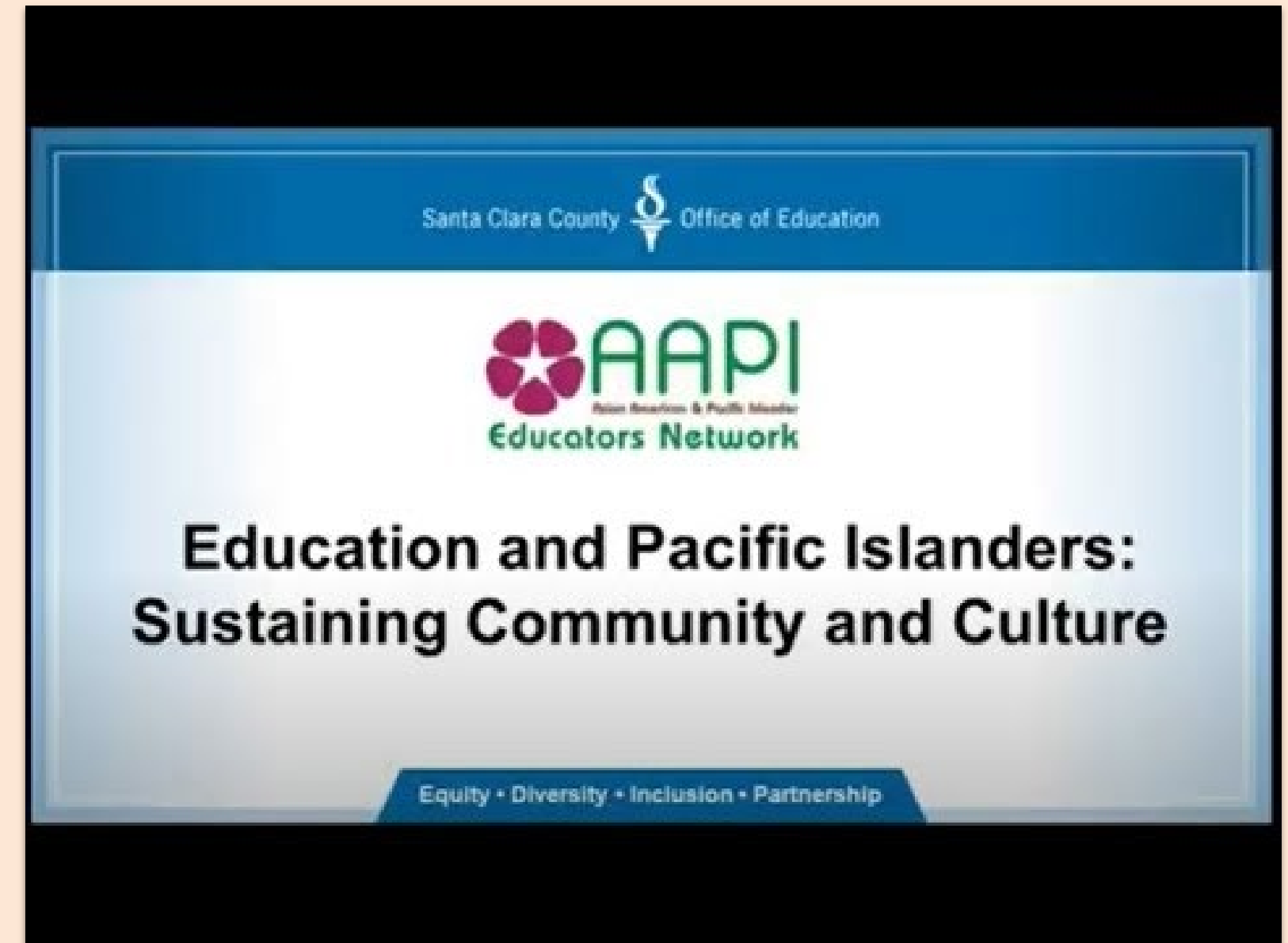
**Danny Naha-Veevalu:** One challenge is that a college education comes with status, so we talked about the importance of humility. We need to remember that education is not just yours, it’s your family’s, your community’s, so bring it back. A change might take many generations, but strides are being made.

**Danny Naha-Veevalu:** Oftentimes PI people can be rendered invisible under the label of AAPI. The AAPI label doesn't exist outside of the US. This label was a result of advocacy from PI leaders who collaborated with AA leaders to create a way to gain resources. This was a coalition. This has been a success, but it’s also resulted in loss of access to resources because we don’t have the numbers needed to be recognized.

# What does a good education for your community mean to you?

## Topics addressed in this video:

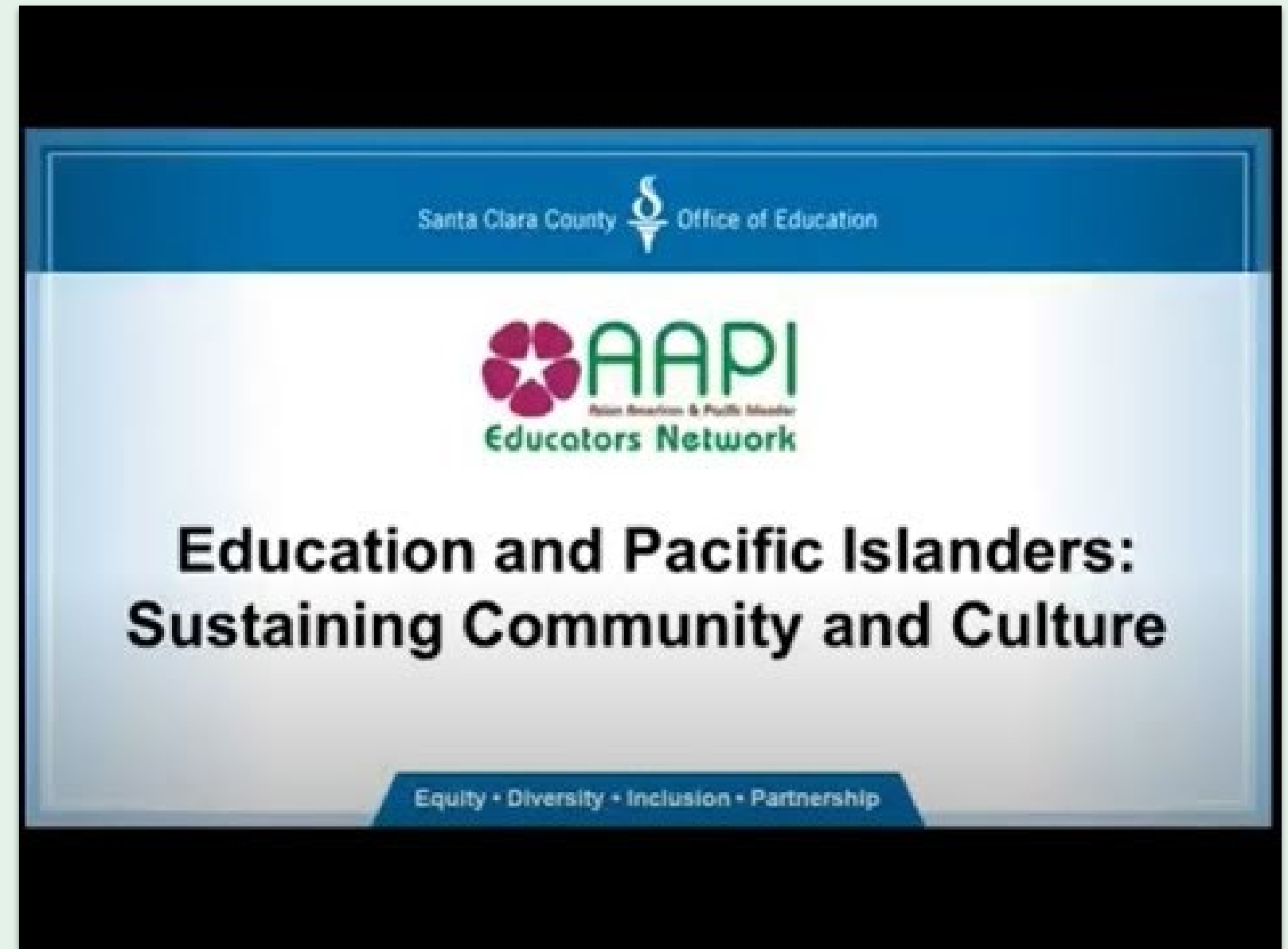
- Sharing good (true) knowledge
- Teaching language and values
- Understanding of true self
- Equity and Access
  - Resources
  - Scholarships
  - Role models/mentors
  - Opportunities
  - Recognition for intelligence & brilliance
  - Graduation



## How has your community worked to ensure that your young people receive the education and support they deserve?

### Topics addressed in this video:

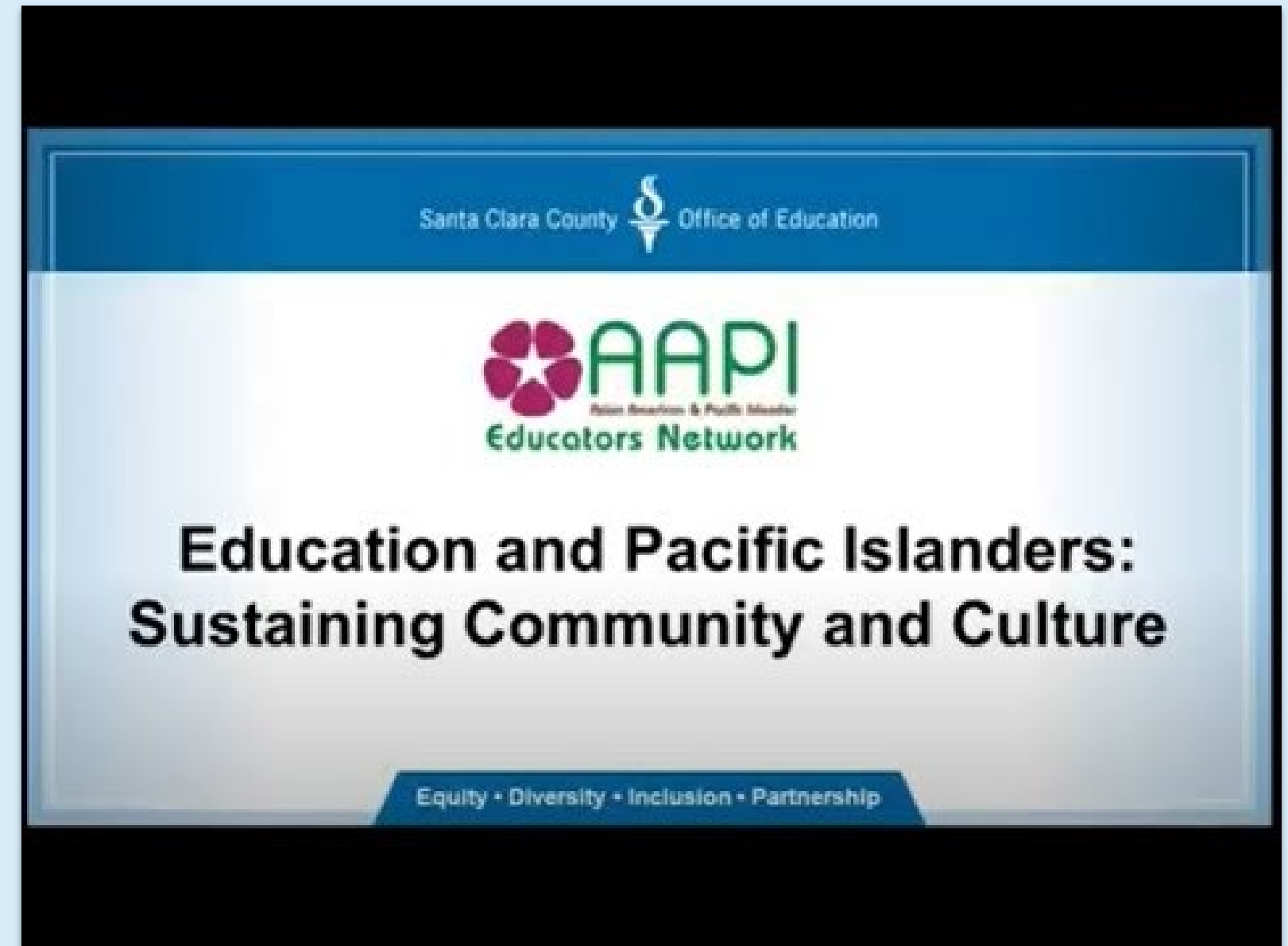
- Dedicated staff to support youth and partner with districts to bring programs to school sites in San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)
- Helping youth stay connected to culture
- Working with the Pacific Islander community to help see the value education
- Leadership programs focused on Pacific Islander college youth
- Teaching discipline and culture



# What have been your educational successes? What are the best ways to support your community?

## Topics addressed in this video:

- Samoan Community Development Center (SCDC) Success
  - Community needs assessment
  - Working with SFUSD to develop programs and connect youth with resources at sites
  - Seeking deep thinking from elders
  - Exposing youth to college
  - Cycle of leadership and cultural advocacy
- Challenge: Pacific Islander (PI) community rendered invisible because of being lumped in with the Asian American community
  - PI not represented in educational history
  - How can we all work together to ensure that PI are a part of important conversations?





# Section IV



## AAPI Youth: Identity and Education

What does your identity mean to you?

### What does being an Asian American or a Pacific Islander mean to you?

Objective: Foster the positive cultural identity development of AAPI students in school

#### Defining the Topic

The youth panelists represent high school students from Santa Clara County schools who identify as Asian American. These students hold significant insight into how their cultural and familial identities shape their school experiences and how their school experiences shape their identities. To create the best learning and development conditions for students, it is imperative adults listen and engage so decision-making and actions around education policies and practices are informed by youth perspectives.

For this section, we define “cultural identity” as:

**Cultural identity** refers to identification with, or sense of belonging to, a particular group based on various cultural categories, including nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and religion.

**Cultural identity** is constructed and maintained through the process of sharing collective knowledge such as traditions, heritage, language, aesthetics, norms and customs. [\[source\]](#)

# Inquiry Questions

**Tell your story:** Introduce yourself, name, pronoun. How do you identify racially, ethnically, culturally, with respect to gender, sexuality, spirituality?

- **Talk about your identity:** In what ways does your identity come into play in your school?
  - Do you think that your teachers, administrators, students, and/or parents treat you in particular ways due to your AA and/or PI identity? If so, how?
  - Are there challenges you face? Advantages afforded to you?
- **Imagine and share:** If you were principal of your school, what would you do to ensure that you are supporting AA or PI identified students and communities?
- **Additional thoughts:** Is there anything else you'd like educators to understand about your experience in school and/or ways that you could be better supported?

## Youth Panelists: What does your identity mean to you?

Moderated by: **Bhargavi Garimella**

I am a student at Harvard College, where I study art, film, and life sciences. While a student at Leland High School, I worked with the Santa Clara County Office of Education and the My Name, My Identity Initiative to create social justice workshops and curriculum for students and educators. As an aspiring physician, I am particularly passionate about dismantling imperialist systems that structure our knowledge and imagination and building community rooted in life and liberation.



### Nihal Sahul

Student, Evergreen Valley High School

I am Nihal, a current senior at Evergreen Valley High School, and I am part of the Peer Advocate Advisory Council. I go by he/him.



## Kalyssa Choy

Student, Branham High School

My name is Kalyssa Choy, and I am a Chinese-American sophomore at Branham High School. My Asian-American identity is something very prevalent in my life, and has impacted me in many ways. Because of the disconnection I have had with my heritage while growing up, I have had difficulties trying to accept and know where I am from. I am grateful to live in an area with lots of diversity, but I still have to face the challenges of finding who I am and battling the normalized racism ingrained in American culture. Even so, I am not afraid to speak out about the wrongs or hurtful nature of some people's actions when I am faced with insensitive instances, and I will continue to advocate for my beliefs. As I continue to grow, I keep the mottos "you only live once" and "everything happens for a reason" in mind. Although it is very cliché, I think it gives the events in my life more meaning and pushes me to reach my goals. I am still on my journey of learning more and getting more connected with my heritage, and I am excited to see what lies ahead of me.



## Jina So

Student, Independence High School

My name is Jina So and I am currently a junior at Independence High School. I was born in Ansan, South Korea, and my family moved to the United States in search of better job opportunities. Ever since then, we have been staying here in California. Despite the short amount of time I've been in South Korea, it has been a major part of my identity and has contributed to my growth as an individual. At Independence High School, I have been involved with many clubs such as Interact and ARK! I am the publicist for Interact Club (International Action) and the co-president for ARK (Acts of Random Kindness) Club. In my free time, I enjoy reading, drawing, listening to music, and watching TV shows.







## Tiffany Mai Tran

Student, Andrew P. Hill High School

Tiffany Mai Tran is a senior at Andrew P. Hill High School. Tiffany is a second generation Vietnamese American and lives in San Jose. They are a youth leader with South Bay Youth Changemakers and are passionate about exploring science and advocacy work for the community, especially in regard to access to healthcare. In their free time, they like to draw and collect stuffed animals.

# AAPI Youth Identities & Education: At-a-Glance

Panelists	Main Takeaways	Significance for Santa Clara County Educators
<p><b>Kalyssa Choy</b></p> 	<p>Students want places to be able to discuss hard topics, but these are often not made available to them. If they are not provided places to be able to talk about things they are passionate about and want to shed light on, they may not speak up.</p>	<p>It is important for kids like me to be in a learning environment where they feel safe and not judged,</p>
<p><b>Jina So</b></p> 	<p>Although some may have different opinions as to what defines a true American, I believe that a true American is someone who accepts different racial and religious backgrounds. Once this is achieved, our community can become more inclusive and secure for people of all backgrounds.</p>	<p>As an Asian American student, I have dealt with hardships caused by others' beliefs about my identity. Getting ridiculed for one's identity has become common in our modern society which results in many feeling ashamed for being the person they are.</p>
<p><b>Tiffany Mai Tran</b></p> 	<p>The model minority is a myth, perpetuated by those in power. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are conditioned to believe the false reality of the myth, but it only seeks to harm Asian communities and drive division between minority groups.</p>	<p>AAPI are considered the dominant racial group in the Santa Clara County census. Despite this, there is a lack of recognition, representation, and understanding of the racial/ethnic diversity of AAPI groups in the education system.</p>
<p><b>Nihal Sahul</b></p> 	<p>We definitely have more LGBTQ+ support than we used to, however, there has been a sudden spike in mental health issues, it is not too common to find people without mental health issues, especially amongst the youth.</p>	<p>While there is more cultural representation now and LGBTQ+ support than there used to be, I think explaining what issues were addressed and what issues have not been fixed will help us predict what kind of issues might arise and how to avoid them.</p>

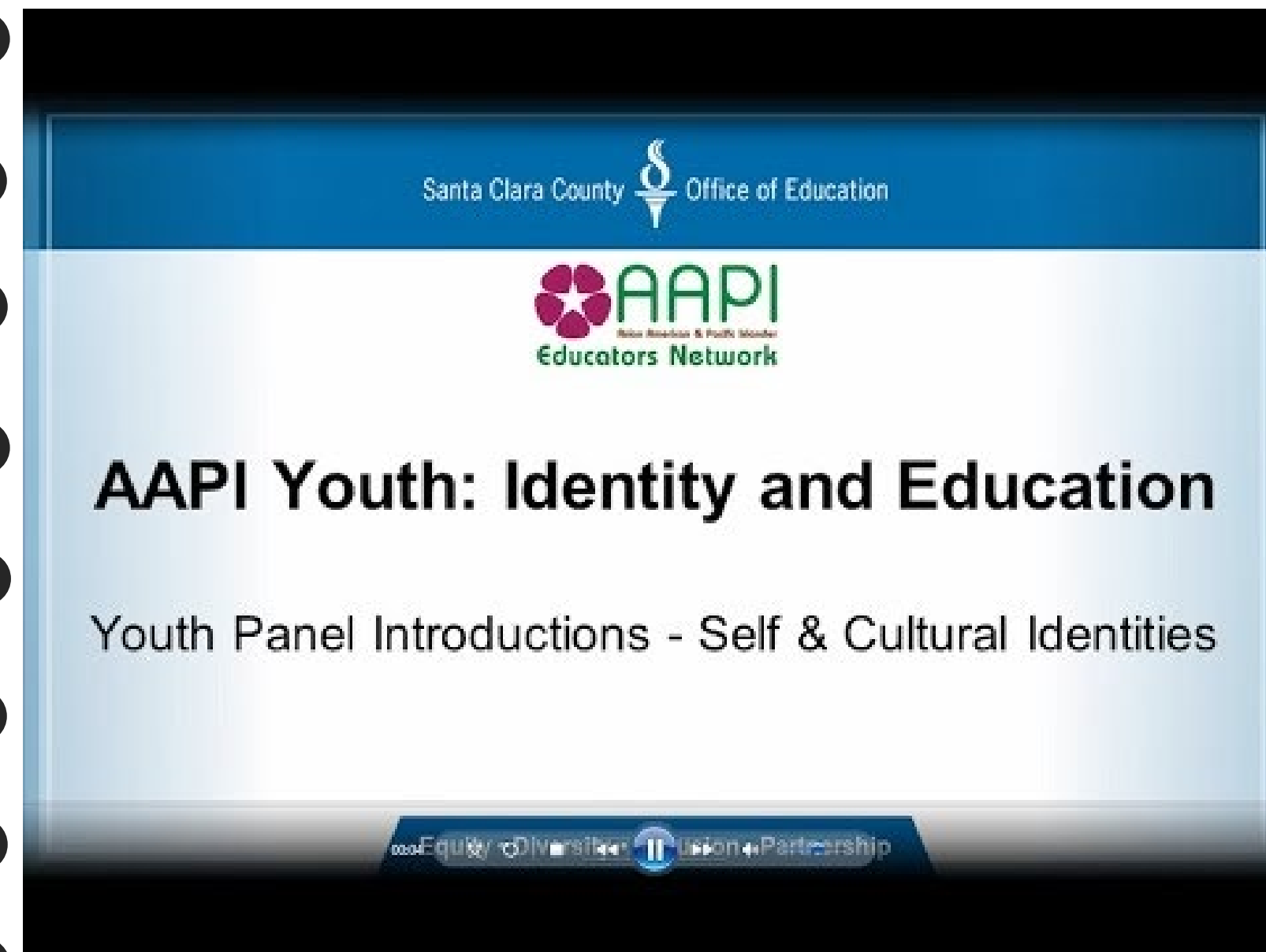
## Youth Panel Introductions

## Self & Cultural Identities

***Cultural identity** refers to identification with, or sense of belonging to, a particular group based on various cultural categories, including nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and religion.*

***Cultural identity** is constructed and maintained through the process of sharing collective knowledge such as traditions, heritage, language, aesthetics, norms and customs.*

Source: Center for Intercultural Dialogue

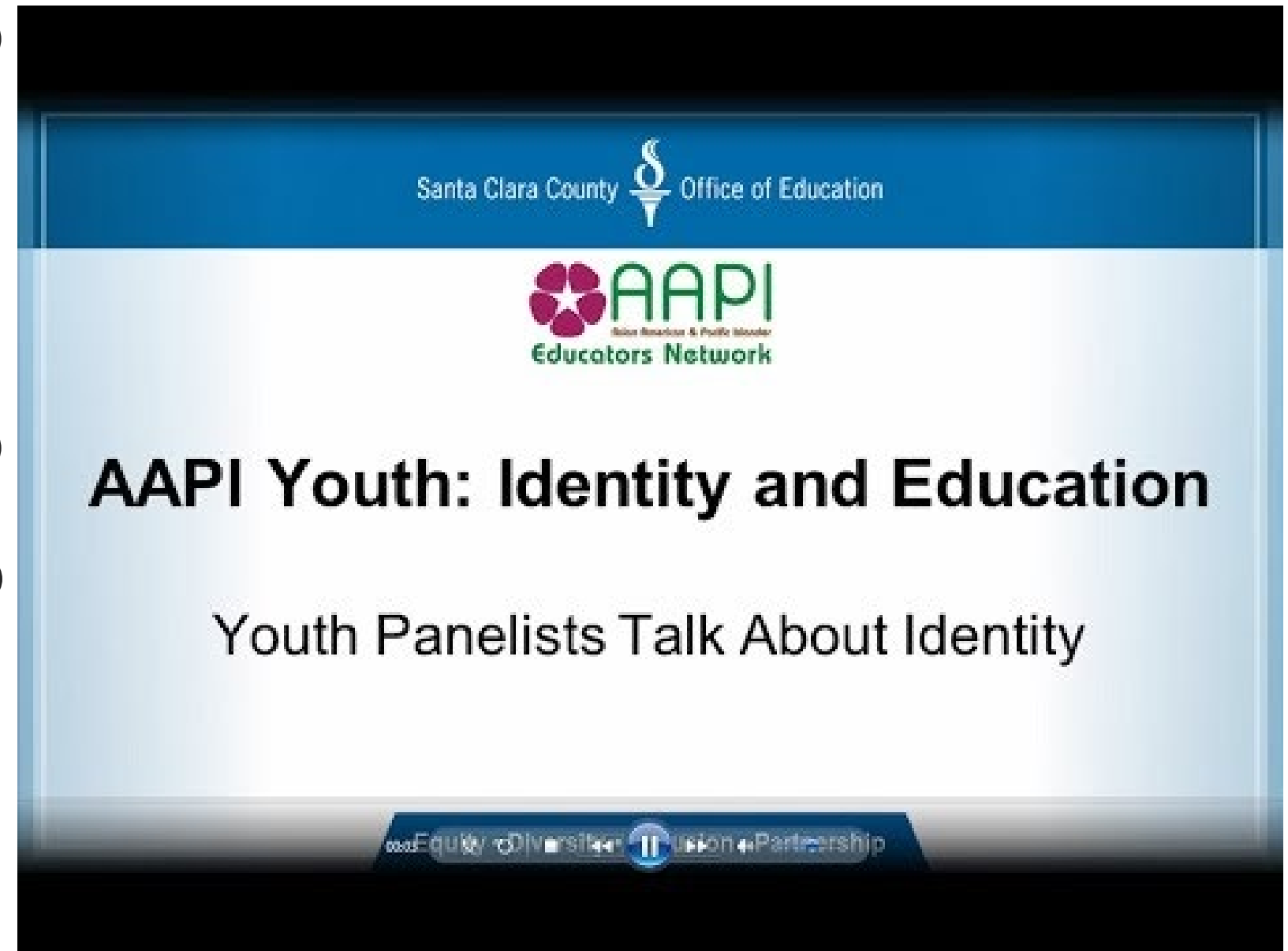


# In what ways does your identity come into play in your school?

Do you think that your teachers, administrators, students, and or parents treat you in particular ways due to your AA and/or PI identity? What are some challenges or advantages?

## Topics addressed in this video:

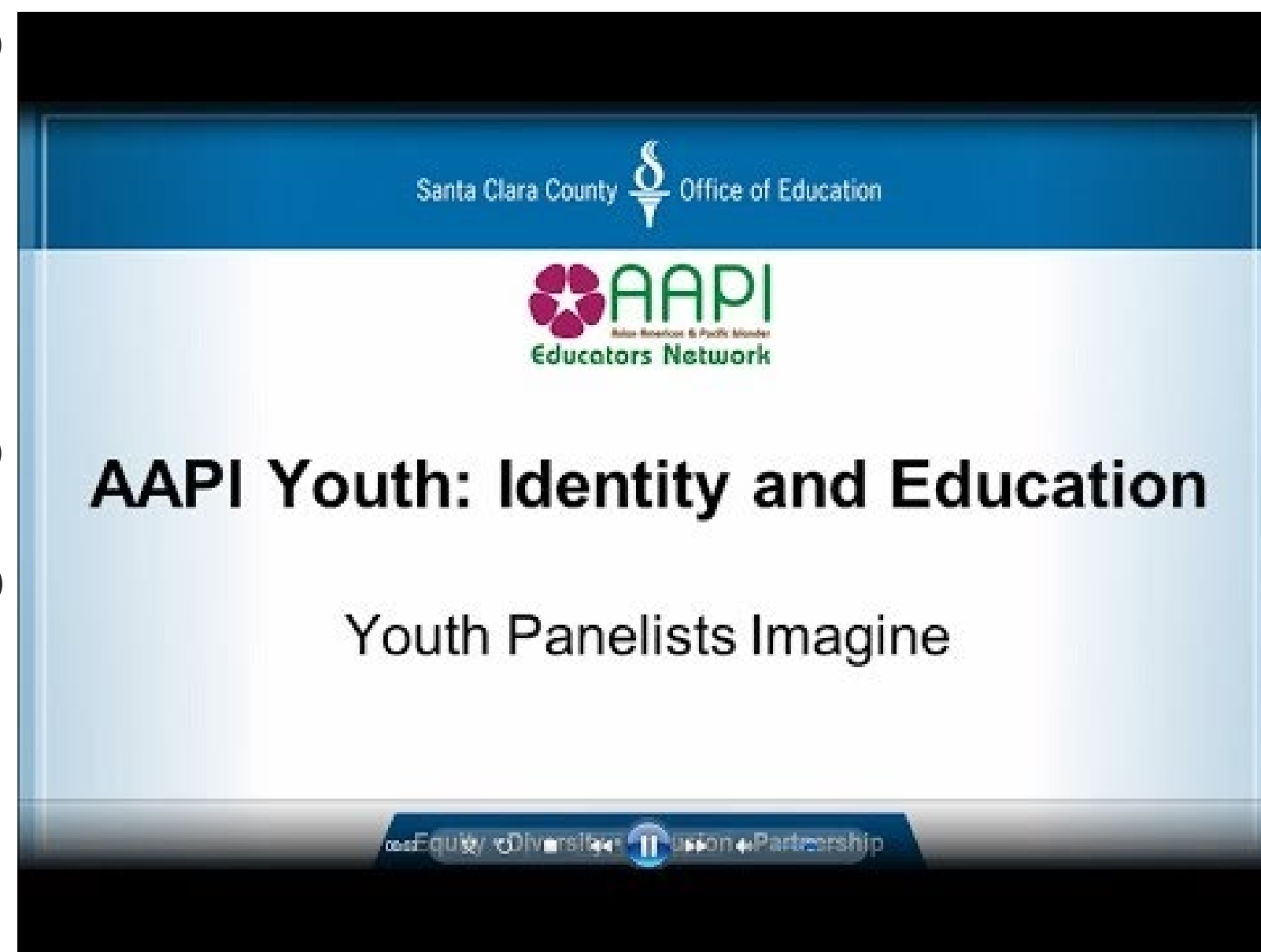
- Bullying
- Parent expectations
- Stereotypes:
  - Model minority
  - COVID-19
  - Fetishization of Asian women
- Americanization
- Racial insensitivity by teachers



If you were principal of your school, what would you do to ensure that you are supporting AA or PI identified students and communities?

### Topics addressed in this video:

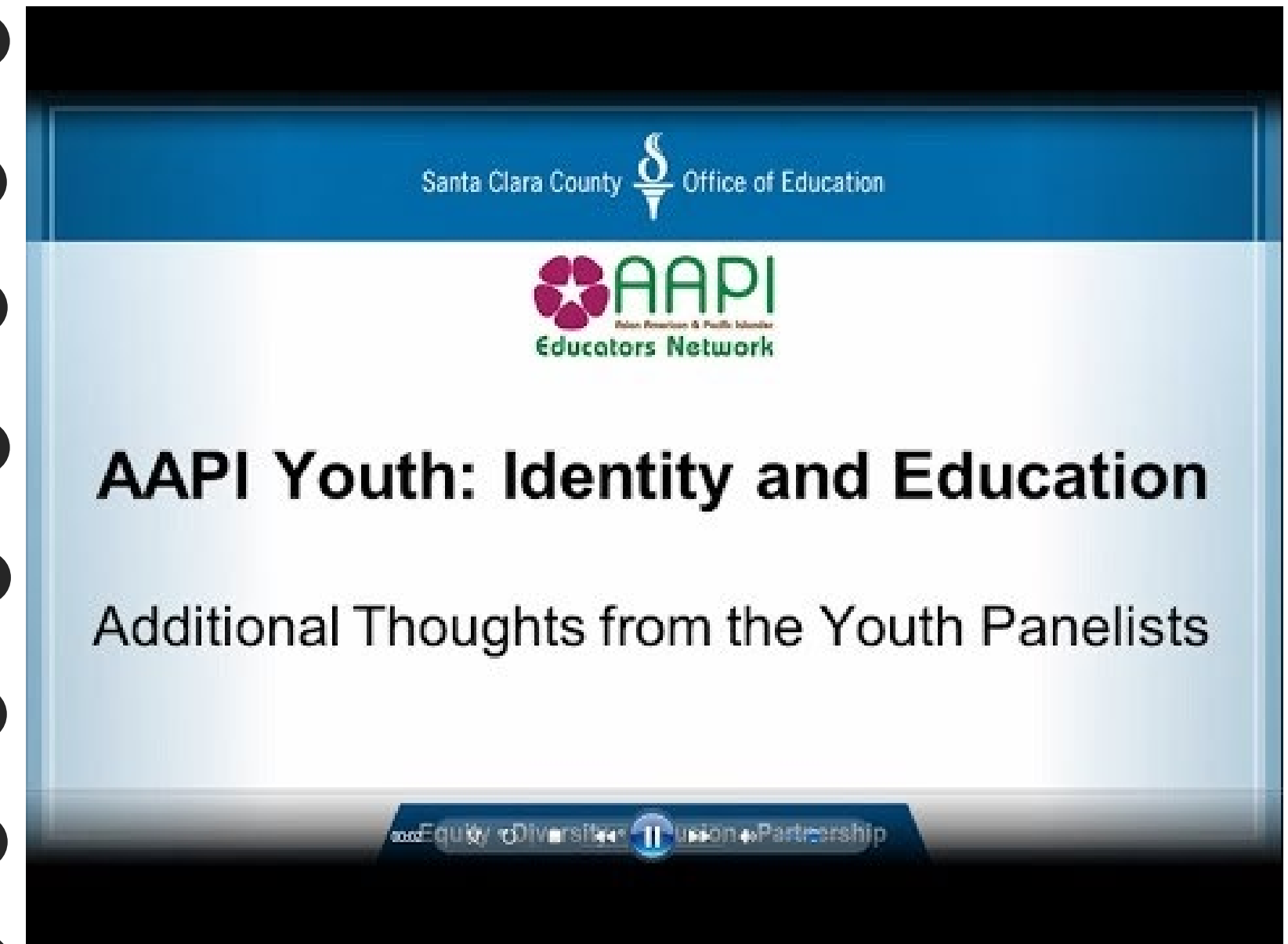
- Cultural community, support groups
- Propagandized American history curriculum
  - Including more AAPI history
  - Teaching history from different perspectives
- Mental Health:
  - Wellness Centers
  - Increasing parent awareness
  - Stress, Anxiety, Depression
- Performative Activism
  - Increase awareness of the AAPI community
- Giving students more of a voice



Is there anything else you'd like educators to understand about your experience in school and/or ways that you could be better supported?

### Topics addressed in this video:

- Addressing racism & discrimination
  - Being aware of what's being said
  - Censorship of student voice
  - Having difficult conversations in class
  - Empowering students - Hearing student voices even when it challenges your own beliefs
  - Defining racism
- Model Minority Myth
  - Understanding nuances between different AAPI groups





# Resources



Understanding and Affirming  
our K-12

**ASIAN AMERICAN  
PACIFIC ISLANDER**

Students



## PANEL 1: IMMIGRATION & DIASPORA RESOURCES

An Bui

- [Diasporic Vietnamese Artist Network \(DVAN\)](#)
- [Southeast Asia Resource Action Center \(SEARAC\)](#)
- [The Gangster We Are All Looking For](#) by Le Thi Diem Thuy
- [Vietnamica](#) by G.B. Tran
- [Thousand Star Hotel](#) by Bao Phi

Sofia Fojas

- Felipe, V. M. (2002). [Hawaii: A Pilipino dream](#). Honolulu, Hawaii: Mutual Pub.
- Hagedorn, J. (2013). [Manila noir](#). New York, NY: Akashic Books.
- Mabalon, D. B. (2013). [Little Manila is in the heart: The making of the Filipina/o American community in Stockton, California](#). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Castillo, E. (2018). [America is Not in the Heart: A novel](#). New York, New York: Viking Books.

Funie Hsu, Ph.D.

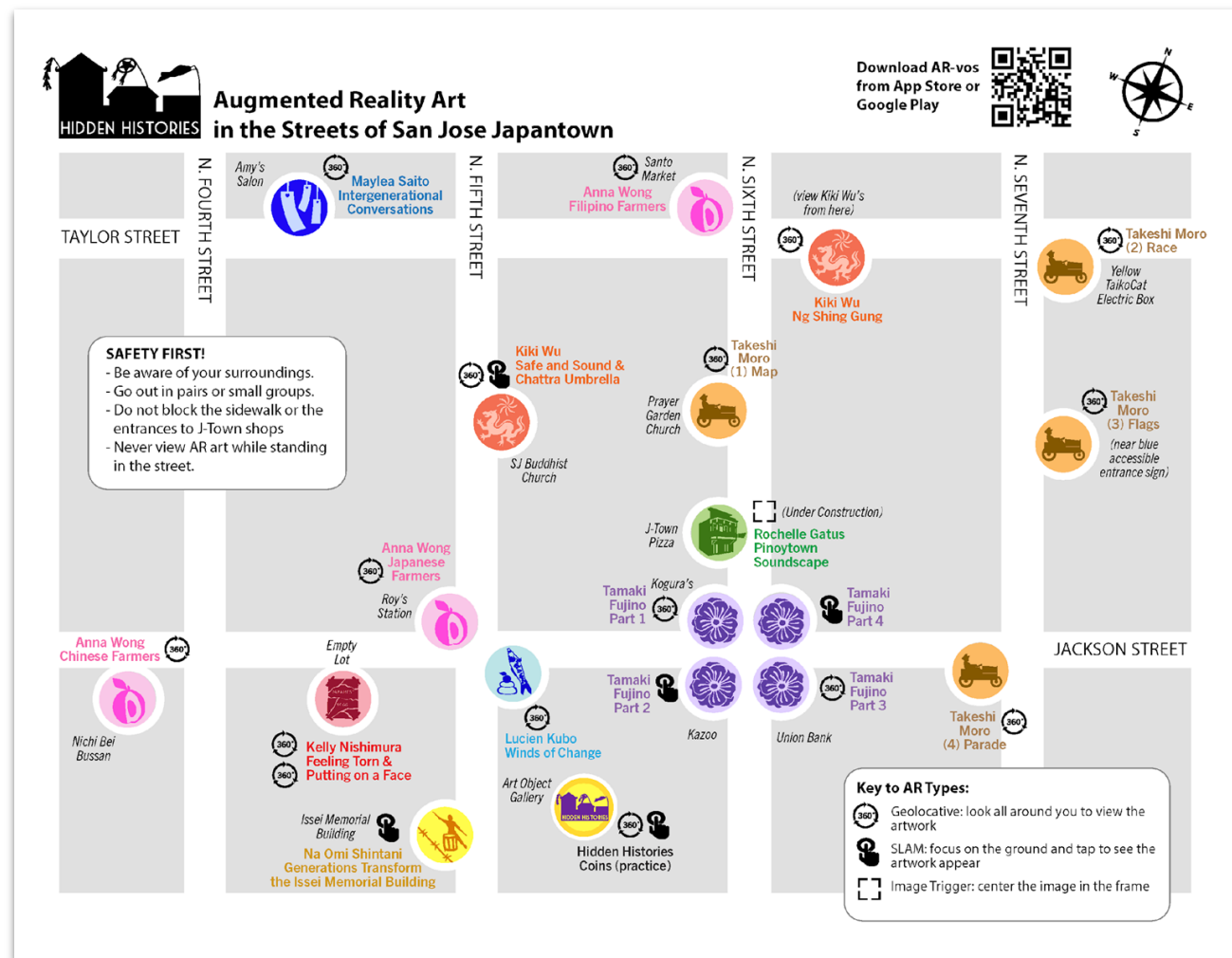
- [The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority](#) by Ellen Wu
- [The Best We Could Do](#), by Thi Bui
- South Asian American Digital Archives (SAADA) <https://www.saada.org/>

# PANEL 2: LOCAL & COMMUNITY PLACES RESOURCES

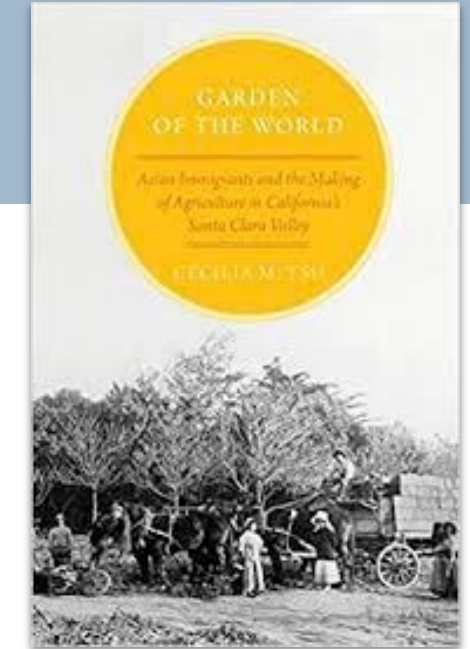
## Tom Izu: Japantown, Chinatown, Pinoytown

Hidden Histories of San Jose Japantown [YouTube Channel](#) and [Website](#):

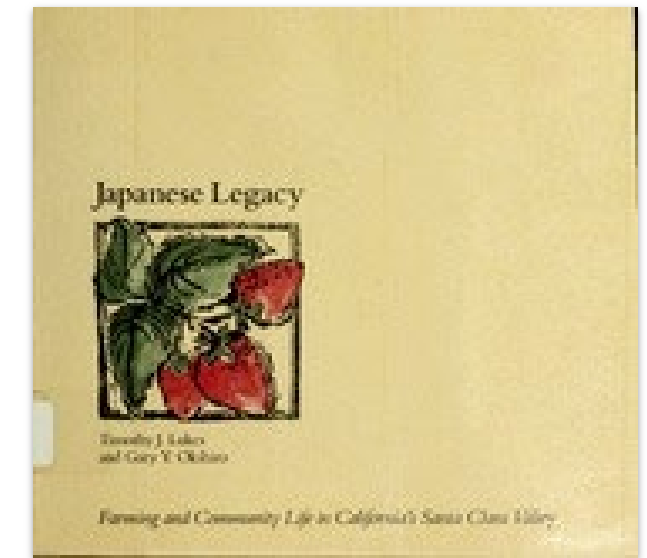
Playlist of recordings of live broadcast events on various aspects of the Japantown community; videos on Chinese, Japanese, Filipino American history of the Japantown area; and clips on the vision and purpose of the project.



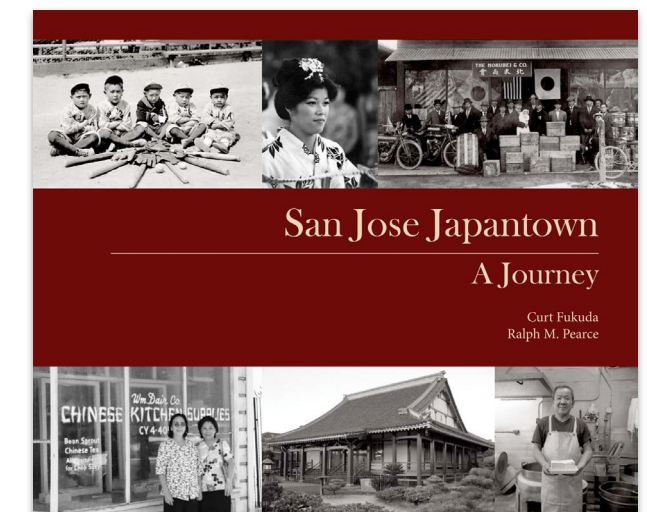
[Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley](#) by Cecilie M. Tsu (2017, Oxford University Press)



[Japanese Legacy: Farming and Community Life in California's Santa Clara Valley](#) by Gary Okihiro and Timothy Lukes (1985, California History Center)

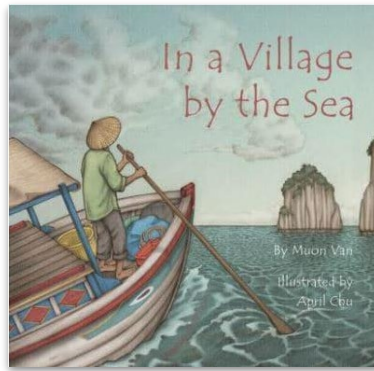


[San Jose Japantown: A Journey](#) by Curt Fukuda and Ralph M. Pearce (2014, Japanese American Museum)



# PANEL 2: LOCAL & COMMUNITY PLACES RESOURCES

## Van Le: Little Saigon



[In a village by the Sea](#)

by Muon Thi Van, illustrated by April Chu



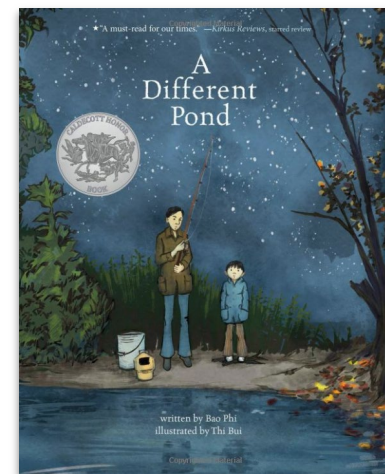
[Butterfly Yellow](#)

by Thanhha Lai



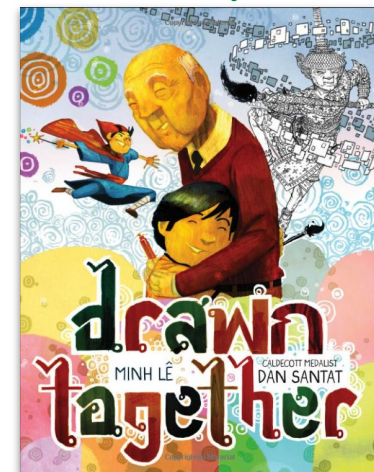
[Wishes](#)

by Muon Thi Van, illustrated by Victo Ngai



[A Different Pond](#)

by Bao Phi, illustrated by Thi Bui



[Drawn Together](#)

by Minh Le, illustrated by Dan Santat



[My First Day](#)

by Phung Nguyen Quang and Huynh Kim Lien



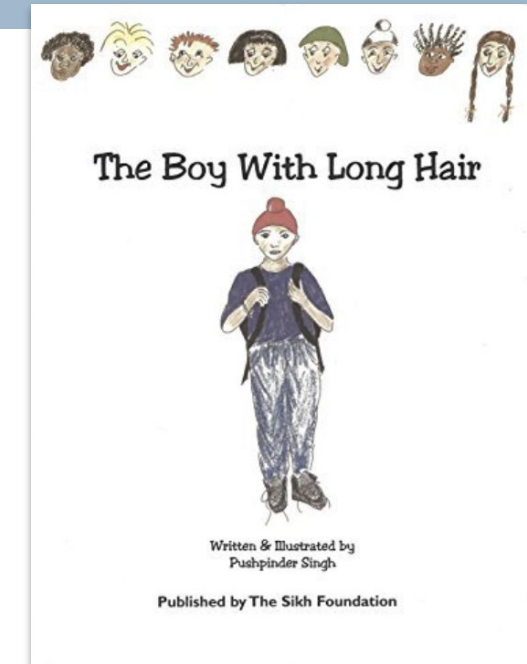
Chinese American Historical Museum, San Jose

## PANEL 2: LOCAL & COMMUNITY PLACES RESOURCES

### Gurinder Pal Singh, Ph.D.: Sikh Gurdwara

- Teachers can organize a field trip to the Sikh Gurdwara San Jose. There is a Sikh Gallery on the second floor of the entrance lobby, that houses a pictorial history and other information about the Sikh faith. Visitors can also enjoy a free meal in the langar hall and look at the beautiful architecture. To reserve a tour, call the Gurdwara at (408) 274-9373 or my personal cell phone at (408) 679-9302.
- [Sikhcoalition.org](http://Sikhcoalition.org) promotes the religious and cultural understanding of all communities. Look for “Creating Safe Schools” under the “[Our Work](#)” tab and educator toolkits under “[Resources](#)” tab.
- My presentations for the academic community are available on the Sikh Gurdwara San José official website [sanjosegurdwara.org](http://sanjosegurdwara.org).

[A Boy with Long Hair](#) by Pushpinder Singh. The book is approved by the California Department of Education for schools, and includes a teacher’s guide.



[Cultural Safari](#) published by the Kaur Foundation.



# PANEL 3: PACIFIC ISLANDERS & EDUCATION RESOURCES

## John Ilesha

- Please visit this [link](#) on a similar assessment that was conducted by a group of Samoan stakeholders and the Pacific Island Task Force.
- [Samoa Community Development Center](#)
- [New Zealand Ministry of Education](#)
- [American Samoa Department of Education](#)
- [Government of Samoa, Ministry of Education](#)

## Kanani Toni Densing

- [Bishop Museum](#) is a place that holds archives among other things that is extremely useful to all and even more if you are a member.

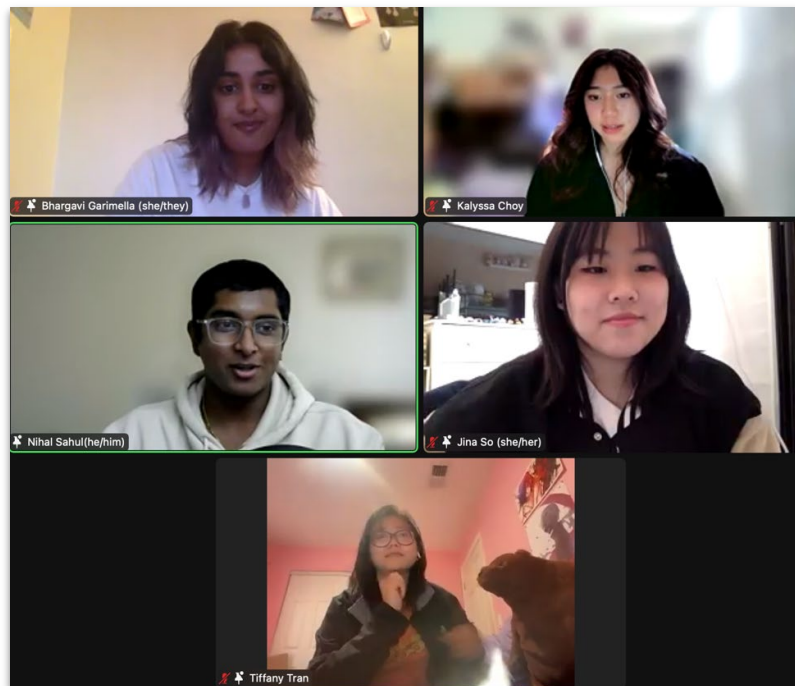
## More Resources

- *Land and Power in Hawaii* by Gavan Daws and George Cooper
- *From a Native Daughter* by Haunani-Kay Trask
- [Department of Land and Natural Resources \(DLNR\)](#)
- [Office of Hawaiian Affairs \(OHA\)](#)
- [Hawaii State Library](#)
- [Iolani Palace](#)
- [Hawaii State Museum](#)
- [University of Hawai'i at Manoa](#)
- [Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology \(UHM\)](#)
- [Letter to Tangata Va 'Ofi in the Tongan Mormon Family](#) by Fuifuilupe Niumeitolu

# PANEL 4: AAPI YOUTH: IDENTITY & EDUCATION RESOURCES

## Kalyssa Choy

- [\*The Difficulty of Being a Perfect Asian American\*](#) by Hua Hsu is a good educational resource to learn about life from an Asian American perspective
- Talk to AAPI students in general
- [Stop Asian Hate](#) sources online, and documentaries on growing up Asian American are all helpful resources.



## Jina So

- The [Asia Society](#) is a non-profit organization seeking to build understanding between Americans and Asians. On the website, there is a Teaching Resources Hub with useful tools and information for educators in regard to the Asian American community.
- [The National Education Association](#) (NEA) is the largest professional employee organization committed to advancing the cause of public education. The website includes many resources and lesson plans for teaching Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage.
- The [website](#) includes a video series for educators created by educators on many topics such as migration, occupation, racial and gender identities, and cross-community building.

# PANEL 4: AAPI YOUTH: IDENTITY & EDUCATION RESOURCES

# STAY CONNECTED

## Tiffany Mai Tran

- [Viewing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders \(AAPI\) as Monolith Is Harmful](#) by Amy Yee
- [AAPI Communities are Not a Monolith - APCO Worldwide](#) by Nicole Robertshaw & Jimmy Koo
- [Asian-American/Pacific-Islander Identity & Mental Health](#)

**Join the Santa Clara County  
Asian American and Pacific Islander  
(AAPI) Educators Network**

Visit: [https://sccoe.to/AAPI Educators Network](https://sccoe.to/AAPI_Educators_Network)



