



25TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear APIS Members:



This year marks the 25th Anniversary Asian Pacific Interest Section (APIS) Conference. Over the past 3+ years since we last held our annual conference, we have endured a global pandemic, a national recession amid rising inflation, and a statewide power crisis through severe winter storms. There have been many other challenges we have all faced – not the least of which involved racially motivated violence against Asian Americans over the past couple of years. However, we also have seen much reason to find hope in the midst of what

may often feel like chaos. If nothing else, we have learned over the past few years that we need each other more than ever; we are better together in community than as individuals in isolation.

We have much to be thankful for, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support and interest in APIS despite the prolonged period of time we have spent apart from each other. The APIS Officers and I are all excited to bring back this Conference, where we can honor and reflect on our storied past; enjoy each other's company in the present; and look to the future for how we can leverage our connections to help our respective communities flourish.

We greatly appreciate our sponsors, speakers, volunteers, and the State Bar of Texas staff that helped make this event possible. I would also like to give special thanks to our Platinum Sponsors, Sheppard Mullin and Haynes Boone. Of course, I would be remiss if I did not specifically recognize the current APIS Officers who spent so much of their time and energy to make this Conference possible: Saba Syed, Sang Shin, Julie Chen Allen, and Nadia Gire. The APIS Council Members, many of whom have been with APIS since its inception, have also been instrumental in helping put this conference together.

I hope attendees had ample networking opportunities with attorneys and judges from throughout Texas, terrific CLE programming, a presentation of annual awards recognizing achievements of our members and our section, and a celebration to remember among old and new friends. I know these connections have and will continue to last many years; I certainly hope their impact will last many generations.

Sincerely,

Phil Kim
APIS 2022-2023 Chair

2022- 2023 OFFICERS

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Vice Chair	Sang Shin
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2022 - 2023 APIS Officers

**PHIL KIM, *Chair***

Phil Kim is a partner in the Corporate and Securities Practice Group and Healthcare Team in the firm's Dallas office. Phil advises various types of healthcare providers in connection with transactional and regulatory matters. He counsels healthcare systems, hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers, physician groups (including non-profit health organizations, or NPHOs), home health providers, and other healthcare companies on the buy- and sell-side of mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, and operational matters, which include regulatory, licensure, contractual, and administrative issues.

Phil has a particular interest in digital health. He has assisted a number of multinational technology companies entering the digital health space with various service and collaboration agreements for their wearable technology. He also assists public medical device, biotechnology, and pharmaceutical companies, as well as the investment banks that serve as underwriters involved in the public securities offerings for such healthcare companies.

**SABA SYED, *Chair-Elect***

Saba Syed is a civil litigator at Bell Nunnally & Martin LLP, a premier full-service law firm based in Dallas, Texas. Saba routinely represents companies and high-net-worth individuals in complex commercial litigation covering a variety of areas, including construction disputes, business torts, and intellectual property disputes.

She also works with clients in the live events industry, advising on contracts, assisting with trademark issues, and providing industry-specific legal counsel. Saba understands the value of meaningful and efficient discourse with clients, courts and opposing counsel. She focuses on getting a "win" for clients by evaluating their specific needs and goals and looking for creative solutions to avoid litigation. When litigation is unavoidable, Saba uses her extensive and varied experience to get high-impact results for her clients.

Saba is also active in the bar, and has received various recognitions in the legal community, including the Up-and-Coming 100 by Texas Rising Stars, Thomson Reuters (2023), and the Outstanding Minority Attorney Award by the Dallas Bar Association (2019). Saba is a native Texan, and the daughter of Pakistani immigrants. In her free time, she enjoys skiing, checking out live music venues with her husband, and aspires to become a watercolor painter (it's a work in progress).

2022 - 2023 APIS Officers

SANG SHIN, *Vice-Chair*

Sang Shin is an experienced immigration attorney with a demonstrated history of successfully representing clients in their immigration matters. He has experience representing companies and employers of all sizes, across industries (small, mid-size, and multinational corporations), in their employment-based immigration matters. He also provides advice to his clients on strategies to ensure that they effectively implement a compliant immigration program that withstands the highest level of scrutiny during government audits.

Sang possesses in-depth experience working with new and emerging start-up companies, international companies investing in the U.S. for the first time, and individual investors to handle immigration-related issues at all stages of their business' life cycle. Moreover, Sang utilizes his experience working with international companies and serves as outside-counsel for his clients so that they may navigate through the complex process of investing in the U.S. With a service-oriented and holistic approach, Sang acts not only as an immigration attorney, but also as a true business partner, working toward his clients' overall success.

Sang has served locally in various roles for the Asian American Bar Association of Houston as former President and Chair of the Board of Directors. He also serves as a Trustee to the Asian American Bar Foundation of Houston and is on the immigration committees for both NAPABA and the State Bar of Texas.

NADIA I. GIRE, *Secretary*

Representing everyone from Ben & Jerry's to the NFL, Nadia Gire's broad range of experience lends to her bright litigation career. In her ten plus years as an attorney, Nadia has tried cases in state and federal courts yielding extremely favorable results for her clients, from zero-dollar defense verdicts to hundred-million dollar resolutions. Nadia's trial and arbitration experience includes a number of complex, multi-party matters and weeks-long federal jury trials.

Her practice includes business and commercial disputes, as well as broad-based insurance coverage litigation and first and third-party insurance work. Nadia has been named a Texas SuperLawyer in the field of insurance coverage since 2018 and has represented clients in several high-profile insurance coverage suits nationwide.

Outside the office, Nadia volunteers and serves on boards for non-profit organizations including The Baylor Teen Health Clinic, Texas Children's Hospital, The Landing, Risala Foundation and Women in the Law Committee of the State Bar of Texas. Nadia is a proud aunt to four incredible nieces and nephews and loves spending time with them.

2022 - 2023 APIS Officers

**Julie Chen Allen - Treasurer**

An immigrant in the early 1980's, Julie was a latchkey kid from sunrise to sundown and a bus rider through high school. Like APIS, school provided everything she needed to thrive—a supportive environment to learn and grow, and to develop lifelong friendships. Supporting public education remains a personal passion.

Julie is currently a Senior Attorney with the Texas Association of School Boards, where she writes policies for, advises, and trains 7,000+ school board members, hundreds of school lawyers, and thousands of superintendents and school leaders across our state who serve more than 5.4 million public schoolchildren. Her advisory and regulatory practice focuses on prevention and compliance, with legal expertise in data governance, cybersecurity, open government, emerging technology, and privacy. The hallmarks of her career thus far include serving as the first general counsel of Spring Independent School District and the first Asian-American general counsel at the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission. This year marks her 19th year of practice.

Prior to law school at the University of Texas, Julie obtained a journalism degree from the University of Texas at Austin. She's written for numerous publications, including The Dallas Morning News, The Daily Texan, Tribune Media Services, The National Journal, and The National Jurist. Julie is married to Albert Allen, a Realtor in Austin and third generation Austinite (fourth generation Texan!). They are proud parents of two sons and two rescue dogs.

**AMAR RAVAL - Immediate Past Chair**

At Berg Plummer Johnson & Raval, LLP, Amar focuses on insurance bad faith claims, ERISA claims, business litigation, and personal injury litigation. Amar is active with the South Asian Bar Association of Houston. He is also a member of the Texas Bar College, Houston Trial Lawyers Association, Houston Bar Association, and is a fellow of the Texas Bar Foundation.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD

**DANIEL D. HU***Chair - 1995, 1996, 1997***Tell us about APIS and what is one hope you have for APIS for the next 25 years?**

In 1995, we started work on founding APIS to be an umbrella organization for lawyers in the APA community and for everyone who has an interest in representing and working with our communities. We faced a number of internal challenges but ultimately the State Bar Board approved APIS as a section. Reflecting back over 25 years, I am proud of how APIS has grown, served our community and contributes to the future success of its members. I would like to see APIS lead the policy discussions on issues such as DEI at the State Bar level.

Do you have a personal role model or mentor to whom you'd like to give a shoutout?

Former APIS Chair and now Bexar County Judge Peter Sakai. I first met Peter at the 1993 NAPABA convention in Los Angeles.

It was great to meet an APA lawyer from San Antonio and he has been a mentor and friend ever since.

What kind of volunteer work do you value and what special meaning does that work hold for you?

Working with Lone Star Legal Aid to ensure people can get help for problems even if they have no resources.

When faced with legal challenges of first impressions, how do you tackle them and what standards guide you?

I have been fortunate to represent the United States in a number of first impression cases. The guiding standard is to do justice, be fair and reasonable. To solve any legal challenge we analyze the policy being challenged and figure out the best way to achieve a just fair result.

What are some of the most effective tools you use for dealing with crises?

Use common sense and never forget the people affected.

Daniel is the civil division chief of the U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Texas, where he has served since 1992.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD

**HONORABLE PETER SAKAI***Chair - 1998*

Tell us about APIS and what is one hope you have for APIS for the next What does APIS mean to you and what is your hope for APIS in the next 25 years?

APIS means the recognition and respect of Asian Americans in the legal and judicial community. APIS is the collective effort of Asian Americans to reach this end. I chose to be part of the APIS because the sum of the total far exceeds the sum of individuals. I hope that APIS will never forget the sacrifices and the paths that Asian Americans have created for past and future generations to come. Nothing ever comes free and without obligation of responsibility.

Do you have any personal role models or mentors you'd like to give a shoutout to?

Yes. I appreciated Asian American elected officials who came before me. Chief Justice David Wellington Chew, Judge Hannah Chow and City Councilman Gordon Quan were the early leaders of APIS that showed me that I could follow in their footsteps. They mentored and encouraged me to participate and become part of APIS and NAPABA organizations. Their leadership and counsel were most instrumental in my political success. I am forever indebted to them for their grace and wisdom. We are still very close friends over all these years.

What experiences and/or people most influenced your legal career?

I learned over the years that personal success comes from relationships with friends and mentors. We now call it networking. For example, my close high school friend encouraged me to leave my home to seek opportunity because I had talent and intelligence that I did not recognize myself. My college friend who literally mentored me to take the LSAT and apply to law school was crucial because I had no clue of how to get into law school.

My law school friend was crucial in counseling me to stick it out in law school when I was not sure that I fit in a law school where I was the only Asian American in the entire law school and wanted to quit. My law school friends helped me get my first job at the District Attorney's Office when no one would respond to my letters of interest and resume. A District Court judge mentored me as a judge and later retired so that I could be elected to his bench where I sat for nearly 16 years. What I am saying is that no one does it by themselves. The lesson learned is that you cannot do this without friends and mentors. You must give before you receive. Please remember where you came from. Be kind and respectful with the people that you come into contact with.

Judge Sakai Peter is the honorable judge of Bexar County.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD

**MICHELLE WONG KRAUSE***Chair - 1999, 2011***Why did you choose to serve and lead for APIS?**

In the 1990's, the number of API attorneys was small but growing. At that time, the State Bar was appointing very few API's to committees and I wanted to change that. When it came time for a seat at the state and local bar leadership table, we were rarely seen.

Without API attorneys in bar leadership, our needs and interests would not be on the radar screen. I hope that API attorneys realize the value of APIS. The networking, CLE, and State Bar involvement are opportunities that should not be missed.

What kind of volunteer work do you value and what special meaning does that work hold for you?

Other than bar work, I value my service as Chair of the Dallas Area Rapid Transit Board of Directors. Being at the table means the I bring the concerns of my community to the forefront. I can ensure that Asian languages are included in communications and outreach to the Asian community engagement happens in the public transit arena.

What have been the greatest accomplishment(s) in your legal career?

I believe in service to my community. From a service perspective, establishing the Dallas Minority Attorney Program (DMAP) which provides CLE and judicial interaction and taking it statewide as the Texas Minority Attorney Program (TMAP) has been a highlight of my career. DMAP won an ABA partnership award, and both DMAP and TMAP has provided CLE, geared to the unique challenges and strengths of the minority attorney, to thousands of attorneys over the years. I also am proud that I served on the Board of Governors of the American Bar Association when the pandemic struck and assisted in providing urgent help.

Any advice for others who want to earn social and career capital in the organizations they are in?

If you are in a large or middle-sized firm, being a leader in a bar organization brings kudos to your firm and positive visibility. As a minority bar leader, you are seen as leader and colleague by the majority bar leaders and develop relationships at a higher level.

Michele's law firm is The Wong Krause Law Firm. For more information visit www.wongkrauselaw.com.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD



ALBERT J. LI

Chair - 2000, 2001

How did you get involved with APIS?

In the late 90's, I happened to get on a Southwest flight and sit next to Michelle Wong Krause who I knew from DAABA. In this circumstantial happening, I was tapped by one APIS Chair to serve and went on to happily serve for two terms. At the time, I served to not only develop our affinity group within the State Bar of Texas but to meet new people, make friends and help other lawyers with a new feeling of community. My hope for APIS in the next 25 years is that this building of bonds and community continues with more vigor from future generations and also evolves into commitment to influence. Texas is too large of a

state with too much diversity to not have an active AAPI community of lawyers that strive to do more for the Bar and Texas.

Is your “North Star” always the same even though you wear different hats?

My “North Star” is always my family, my wife (Tini) and kids (Lucas, Reese and Stella), but also my brother, sister and parents. I’ve come to learn that everyone has to be grounded in something safe and happy. When the practice of law and our careers are stressful, having a place to retreat to, re-center and find joy is so critical. You realize that the definition of “family” can be broad too, because over the years the personal connections and friends you make through organizations like APIS can also serve as the personal outlet and community where you find comfort, joy and something familial.

How have you measured success in your legal career?

It is easy to quickly jump to things in my career, such as being a corporate M&A lawyer, a law partner at a global law firm, and then legal executive in companies, by looking at the resume or to the deals, IPOs, intricate transactions, and matters closed on a “deal sheet.” The reality is that you will struggle to remember those things over time, unless you put them on paper and consciously think about them. What I remember the most in my legal career are the moments of time spent with other lawyers, who were mentors, mentees, and friends. I am most proud of the lawyers I was able to influence, teach a few things to, who went on to do great things, as well as the times I was able to sit down with others and learn from them.

Advice for attorneys seeking to grow?

Lawyers learn by “practicing,” so you must be introspective and intentional about your career development goals and about finding practice opportunities to develop. This applies at the law firm where you must be intentional about what partners and clients you work for, or in-house where you must be intentional about the subject matter and teams you want to work with. The common thread is to understand your own current happiness and development goals, and then seek out and align that development and work—whether that’s inside your organization or outside.

Al is currently the Chief Legal Officer, General Counsel & Compliance Officer for Owllet.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD



TONI D. NGUYEN

Chair - 2002

What has APIS meant to you?

APIS has a special place in my heart because at the time of my membership, we didn't have a local AAPI chapter, and we didn't have enough AAPIs at the time to create an Austin chapter of NAPABA. At the time, we lacked a strong statewide establishment that could consolidate the various local organizations and unite AAPI interests. APIS was that vehicle, and I wanted to

be part of the impact it would make.

What is one hope you have for APIS in the next 25 years?

I would like to see APIS continue to grow in number, strength and influence, and to have a voice at the State Bar leadership by having a member serve as a Section Liaison to the State Bar Board.

Do you have any personal role models or mentors you'd like to give a shoutout to?

One of my greatest mentors and role models is the former Judge Jerry Buchmeyer. He taught me humility, empathy, compassion and passion to help those who are less fortunate or have faced injustice--and that it's okay to laugh and have fun even while doing serious work. I have learned wonderful leadership and management skills from my former GCs, such as Keenan Conder, Sterling Miller, and Russ Coleman, and my current GC, Michael Bisignano. They all remain amazing mentors.

What kind of volunteer work do you value and what special meaning does that work hold?

I particularly find it most rewarding to support my son, Austin, with his non-profit entity, Chord for Life, which serves the Texas senior community through musical performances, craft kits, and monthly notes. I have tried to teach my children the importance of giving back to our community, and I hope they carry that learning throughout their lives.

What experiences and/or people most influenced your choice to become a lawyer?

I became a lawyer largely because of my father. He spoke English with a heavy accent, and people would talk down to him like he was stupid. I watched him often get mistreated. I figured that people would take advantage of my family and me less if I were educated and trained in the law. In the process, I can also help to give others a voice.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD

What do you look for when joining or forming a team?

The best culture is one that is inclusive and open to new ideas and solutions—that allows team members to make mistakes and learn from them; where team members encourage and uplift each other; with team members who leave their ego at the door and collaborate with others.

Advice and tips for success?

Don't be afraid to ask questions; always be curious; be quick to listen and slow to speak; and be resourceful and do your part to gain the needed knowledge and skills to perform the job well. Growing often requires getting out of your comfort zone. Find a trusted mentor and champion to help navigate the new role and join your local AAPI organization. Most successful lawyers are problem solvers, are pragmatic and practical, see the big issues that are most relevant to the situation, and do not get caught in the weeds or details that are trivial or don't make an impact. They don't sacrifice the good on the altar of the perfect, and are not afraid to give timely advice in situations where they may not complete information. Women lawyers should read the books "The Confidence Code" (Kay and Shipman) and "How Remarkable Women Lead" (Barsh and Cranston).

Toni is currently the Vice President and Assistant General Counsel at PowerSchool.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD**CHARLENE TSANG-KAO***Chair - 2003***Why did you choose to lead, serve, and associate with APIS?**

Flash back to 1994: as a student leader at Berkeley and a California transplant to Texas, I took it for granted that Asian Americans had established support networks to help each other along and be supported. It was demoralizing to learn as a 1L at UT that not only were we one of the smallest minority groups but also we were not allowed to participate in UT's minority orientation program.

I was told there "wasn't a need" even though I, like many of my fellow AAPI students, were first-generation law students. When I graduated, that gap was evident in law firms too, and the local AABA and statewide APIS was a welcoming platform for us to gather, be supportive, and share our experiences.

What are your hobbies and how do they relate, if at all, to being a lawyer?

Downhill skiing and poker. To be good at either, you must:

1. Know the strategic goal(s). Do you just want to have a relaxing ski weekend with your family? Or use your time on the mountain to practice as many challenging runs as possible? The answer charts all other decisions. Nothing ruins a well intended ski vacation more than forcing someone (even if it's just you) down runs they (you) didn't want to ski. Likewise, clarity around strategic goals is the foundation to discern the right tactics to apply in the practice of law so that you don't go down the wrong path with clients, cases, or deals.
2. Develop knowledge. The talent you're born with simply improves your odds. In Texas Hold'em poker, getting dealt a pocket AK is a pretty good opening hand. But there's a reason they call it the Big Slick – it's slippery and is a fleeting advantage if you don't know what to do with it. Understanding your table position (your leverage), how to bet and protect your hand (hedging the downside), calculating pot odds (risk/benefit), adjusting if necessary on the flop/turn/river (settlement, switching up the teams' expertise, recalibrating client expectations), and reading the room (who or what is driving their decisions, what do they need vs. want to "get to yes") comprise key knowledge every serious poker player (and lawyer) needs to learn.
3. Practice, practice, practice. There is no shortcut to developing IRL experience so that you are ready for any terrain and any hand you're dealt. Even when you think you're on a ballroom blue on a bluebird day, sometimes unexpected terrain or weather can appear – but with well-practiced knowledge, you will be prepared.

Charlene is Assistant General Counsel at Marathon Oil Corporation.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD

**HON. BRENDA T. RHOADES***Chair - 2004***What does APIS mean to you?**

APIS was in its infancy at a time I had leadership roles in both DAA-BA and NAPABA. I jumped at the chance to support the newly founded statewide Asian organization. It allowed members of local Asian bars to establish relationships throughout Texas. I cherish the people I met through APIS and maintain friendships to this day.

Do you have a personal role model or mentor to whom you'd like to give a shoutout?

When she was elected a state court judge in 2001, Karen Scholar (then Karen Johnson) proved that an Asian American could become a judge in Texas. Then she went on to become a much admired jurist. Two years later, I was appointed as the only sitting Asian American bankruptcy judge in the country and the first Asian American on any federal bench within the Fifth Circuit.

Since then, Karen Scholar continued her journey when she was appointed to the federal bench as a District Judge. She continues to inspire and mentor me.

Do you have any hobbies?

I am a total basketball nerd. I love the NBA and NCAA basketball. I'm in heaven during March Madness.

Do you have any advice for young or new lawyers?

Be kind to everyone at all times.

Judge Rhoades is Chief Judge of the United States Bankruptcy Court of the Eastern District of Texas.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD



WESLEY YOUNG

Chair - 2006

What does APIS mean to you?

APIS was my only connection to Asian attorneys in other Texas cities and I especially appreciated getting to know those who set an example of success for me as a young lawyer in a heavily underrepresented demographic in the state. Dan Hu, Russell Wong and Justice David Chew are among those I would not have met without APIS.

APIS gave me the opportunity to both learn from other leaders and to serve to help grow other groups such as the Austin Asian American Bar Association (AABA). Friends at the AABA in Houston helped inspire our hugely successful Dallas AABA annual event in 2008, which sparked a renewed interest in the group and a momentum that continues to carry on today.

What is one hope you have for APIS in the next 25 years?

To host a 50th Anniversary celebration!

Do you have any personal role models or mentors you'd like to give a shoutout to?

Hon. Karen Scholer, Kathleen Wu, and Caren Lock have all motivated me to be a better lawyer with their example of tireless drive for excellence and to be a better person with their genuine interest in the lives of those around them. I'm humbled and honored to be their friend.

What experiences most influenced your choice to become a lawyer?

I chose the practice of law because I thought it offered the broadest opportunity to experience different types of work. That has played out in my career. I've worked at a law firm and at in-house corporate offices. I've litigated cases for individual plaintiffs and for corporate defendants. I've worked for nonprofit associations and with for-profit corporations. I've engaged in both policy work and in political lobbying. I worked in a non-practicing capacity doing government affairs and then returned to the practice of law. I've been asked to pick up new practice portfolios from employment cases to franchise law. The diversity of work has been very interesting and satisfying.

What's one piece of advice you'd give to new attorneys or those transitioning to a new role?

Let your standard be excellence in all things. It doesn't matter whether it's in the office or at a volunteer community service day or when you take a position at an organization or on a committee. People notice and your performance at these "non work" events will define your reputation as much as your job.

Wes is Legal Counsel and Government Affairs at G6 Hospitality LLC.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD**PATSY YUNG***Chair - 2007***What does APIS mean to you?**

For me, APIS represents a bond of Asian American attorneys across Texas, who support each other through both personal and professional growth, and collectively stand together as a voice for the Asian-American community . Through APIS, I have met many incredible colleagues, some of whom are now dear friends, and have been given the opportunity to honor my heritage . It is my hope that APIS will continue to be that beacon for others, as it has been for me, in the next 25 years .

What is your “North Star” when you wear different hats – is it always the same or different?

My “North Star” always is to remember to be grateful for the blessings in my life. An attitude of gratitude keeps things in perspective both personally and professionally, and helps me maintain an optimistic outlook most days .

How do you define culture in a world where everyone claims to have the best culture? What do you look for when joining or forming a team?

In my current position, our Office of Chief Counsel motto is community, collaboration, and collegiality, which truly sums up the amazing culture of our organization. Our legal team was built, and continues to be built, on the premise that a sense of community based on collegiality breeds cohesive teamwork and collaboration to achieve our mission .

What’s one piece of advice you’d give to new attorneys or those transitioning to a new role?

A pearl of wisdom that I share with new attorneys or those transitioning to a new role is to seek strong mentorship so that they have guidance in navigating their new career or crossroad . It is important to know that you are not alone and there are fellow attorneys who have your back . Joining an awesome organization like APIS provides these mentorship opportunities.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD



LISA S. TSAI

Chair - 2009

What does APIS mean to you?

APIS has been a home base for me throughout my legal career. I will always be grateful to Past-Chair Al Li who invited me to attend the APIS conference when I was a first-year law student at UT Law School. I remember feeling immediately comfortable and welcomed by this group of very impressive APA lawyers from across the state of Texas, and I was heartened and invigorated to know that there was an APA lawyer community that would embrace and support me after I graduated from law school. When I returned to Austin a few years later, I found instant community, fellowship, and friendship through APIS.

I was enthusiastic to help build and lead such a worthwhile organization, and I was honored to serve as APIS Chair when we celebrated 15 years (more than a decade ago). My hope is that APIS will continue to promote and support APA lawyers in Texas as they rise into prominent leadership positions at their firms, companies, the judiciary, and elsewhere. Looking forward to the next 25 years!

What is your “North Star”?

My North Star is remembering who I am, where I came from, and what I stand for. This is true whatever hat I am wearing: trial lawyer, managing partner, community member, mom, and wife. Like many of you, I had the good fortune of being raised by remarkable immigrant parents who taught me (by example and words) how to work hard, act with integrity, and help others along the way. My mom is this amazing person who was very active in the APA community and took on various leadership roles that had positive and long-lasting impacts. I grew up watching her use her free time every weekend to help others in the APA community, while working full time as a nurse at MD Anderson and raising five kids. I am forever grateful to my mother for showing me the importance of serving others and how to wear so many hats with so much grace.

Is there a book that all lawyers should read?

Funny you should ask this question! I think there is a dearth of literature for law students and lawyers on a very important topic: the happiness of lawyers. My own view is that we have a silent crisis that has been percolating for some time in our profession. Most lawyers report being unhappy in their professional lives, which unfortunately often extends into their personal lives. I believe our profession has lost its way over the last few decades, with many factors contributing to the erosion of the purpose and meaning behind practicing law. My law partner and I are currently writing a book on this topic, and we hope it will serve as a touchstone for law students and lawyers (and hopefully a happier profession).

Lisa is Managing Partner at Reid Collins & Tsai. For more information visit www.reidcollins.com.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD**CINDY Y. LIN***Chair - 2010***What has APIS meant to you? What is your hope for APIS in the future?**

APIS means family and empowerment. Through APIS, I was embraced by father, mother, and sibling figures who willingly imparted their wisdom and generously guided me through the legal world as if I were one of their own. Through my APIS family, I found a safe place to share my struggles and was always met with honest advice and sincere encouragement, which has empowered me in so many ways throughout my legal journey. I hope that more attorneys in Texas, whether just starting out or veterans, will actively participate in APIS and contribute to the growth and empowerment of our APIS family!

What are your hobbies?

My current hobby is thinking of business ideas that incorporate things I enjoy doing or that I want to create for my son and daydreaming about turning them into reality. One idea is to become a Cricut crafting expert and create bilingual (Mandarin Chinese and English) products. Another idea is to publish children's bilingual books geared towards educating children about Chinese history and traditions. Yet another idea is to be able to educate children about food and nutrition that would be fun for them and create healthy eating habits. The list goes on. Thinking and daydreaming are the keywords here!

What have been the greatest accomplishment(s) in your legal career?

The greatest accomplishment in my legal career has been starting my own law firm. It was a very difficult and long-drawn-out decision to leave behind my partner role in Biglaw. I truly loved what I was doing but I was at a point in my life that required change. However, it was difficult to leave because I thought being a partner at a big law firm defined me and I would be lost if I left. I also felt a responsibility to struggle through in order to be a role model for Asian American female lawyers. I also thought that there was no way I could give up such a coveted position after working so hard for it, especially after being told by a law school professor that I would never make it to Biglaw. After a series of events that gave me the push I needed, I am now a happy, practicing solo attorney!

Cindy's law firm is Cindy Lin Law, PLLC.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD



ZEENA ANGADICHERIL

Chair - 2012

What has APIS meant to you?

I remember feeling instantly comfortable at my first APIS event, in a way that I never had at other professional legal events. I met so many smart and accomplished people, who also happened to be friendly and approachable. That successful, kind and welcoming vibe is something I always associate with APIS. I was honored to be a part of the organization; its membership includes trailblazers who paved the way for other Asian American attorneys and who were willing to openly share resources and lessons they had learned along the way.

What is one hope you have for APIS in the next 25 years?

To keep having annual retreats and growing the next generation of APIS members!

What are your hobbies and how do they relate, if at all, to being a lawyer?

Running and baking. Like being a lawyer, running requires discipline, consistency and the regular practice of reaching for a goal. Also like being a lawyer, baking involves following a series of requirements with precision and occasionally, with creativity too.

What do you look for when joining or forming a team?

I look for an environment where everyone seems comfortable, empowered, and encouraged to contribute to whatever is being discussed. I look for a culture that acknowledges ambition and desire for success, but also openly recognizes and appreciates a person's life outside of their work.

Any advice for anyone who may feel stuck in the role they are in, or who are seeking new opportunities?

Be curious and bold in going after what you want – or trying to figure out what you want! I have been surprised by the number of people who were willing to make time for me when I was in a transition period. It can take only one conversation or interaction to change the trajectory of your career.

Zeena is Of Counsel at Greenberg Traurig.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD**ALICE LIU MCCOY***Chair - 2013***What has APIS meant to you?**

I was fortunate enough to connect with APIS early in my legal career. I found distinguished mentors, extensive professional and business development opportunities, and—most importantly—lifelong friendships. Texas is a big state. Depending on where you live and practice, being an API attorney can be lonely. Nothing can replace the camaraderie and support that you gain from connecting with your API peers. In New Mexico, where there is no APIS, I appreciate daily how privileged I was to be a part of APIS in Texas. Participating in APIS activities and leadership will always be one of the most meaningful experiences in my life.

What is one hope you have for APIS in the next 25 years?

My fervent hope is that APIS invests in the great minds, resources, and relationships of our membership to give back to our communities across the state. This can take many forms, depending on the values of each individual member, but I hope that APIS can provide a consistent, organized forum for discussions, planning, and partnerships to take place for members who share similar values and goals beyond career advancement. Since I have switched tracks from private practice to public interest work, I have found relatively few forums for API attorneys to connect on public interest issues. All of us, whether in private practice or doing public interest work, invest in important projects and issues in our communities. I would love to see APIS provide that forum.

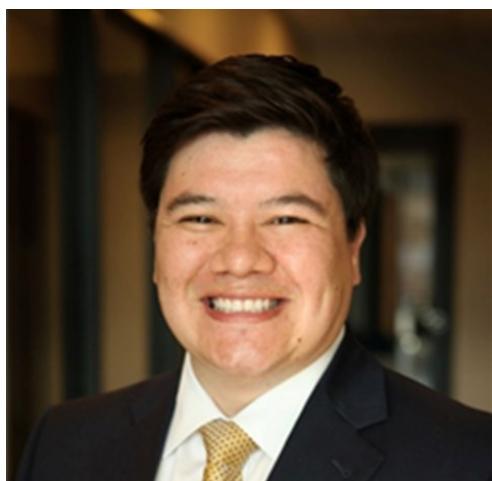
What is your “North Star” when you wear different hats?

In all aspects of my life, I ask myself, “Will my actions contribute to a more joyful, equitable, or kind world?”

Do you have a favorite story about a major career development?

I explored many career paths before landing in law school. I loved every minute of law school and immediately knew the law was the right fit for me. I was certain that I should use my medical and science background in my legal career and interviewed with our beloved Al Li for a summer internship at a medical devices company. After the interview, Al said, “This isn’t the right job for you. You’re a litigator. Go litigate.” He was right. Winning lawsuits led me to my current job, which I love immensely. I don’t litigate anymore, but—sometimes—I sure do miss it.

Alice is the Executive Director of the New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Council.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD**BILL RICHMOND***Chair - 2014***What does APIS mean to you?**

To me, APIS means Community, Connection, and Camaraderie. Community because of a group with shared experiences both personally and professionally—people that just get you. Connection because of a deep desire amongst all members to learn more about each other and be supportive. And Camaraderie because of the nonstop support that every member has for each other's success. My hope is that APIS continues to exemplify these ideals for decades to come.

What kind of volunteer work do you value and what special meaning does that work hold for you?

I enjoy serving on the board of directors for Dallas Children's Advocacy Center, one of the leading groups in the nation helping abused children and their families recover and move past the trauma of abuse.

What are your hobbies and how do they relate, if at all, to being a lawyer?

Everything is law-related! But my hobbies include lots of reading, violin, piano, golf, shooting sports, stand up comedy, to name a few. I'd definitely give stand up comedy a chance as a career if my wife was cool with it (hint, she isn't).

What experiences and/or people most influenced your choice to become a lawyer? Do you have a favorite story?

During the freshman year of high school, a friend suggested that we join the mock trial team. He didn't end up doing it, but I did—and my first role was playing the witness named—no joke—"Dr. Wang Chung." I ended up doing about 400 mock trials in high school and college before switching to moot court in law school.

What's one piece of advice you'd give to new attorneys or those transitioning to a new role?

Your license is the same as the guy with 30 years' experience. Your Westlaw account is the same as his too. It may take a little longer, but you have the ingredients for success. Make the most of it and keep your chin up!

Name one must-read book.

"Radical Candor" by Kim Scott. You're on a team whether you realize it or not, and interpersonal relationships can be your headwind or a tailwind.

Bill is co-founder of Platt, Cheema, Richmond. Visit www.pcrfirm.com for more information.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD**ANN SHEU***Chair - 2015, 2017***Your hope for APIS in the next 25 years, go!**

My hope is that APIS continues to grow in members, as well as impact. There is something truly unique and special about our community, and our annual conference always feels like a fun family reunion. The support that APIS members provide each other is unparalleled, and my hope is that we continue to nurture this.

What is your “North Star” in life?

This is one of our areas of focus for our clients at Mpowered Families. We call it your Decade Dream, and we help our families craft their Individual Decade Dream as well as their Family Decade Dream. Once written, this Decade Dream, along with core values, serves as the North Star in all decisions. When Sunny and I started doing this work many years ago, we experimented with various goals for our Family Decade Dream – but none of them were sticky or really excited us as much as 2000 free days. More importantly, none of them really inspired us to change how we were living our daily lives. By the end of 2029, our family will have taken 2000 Free Days together.

Free Days is a term from Strategic Coach, and it's defined as 24 hours of not working, not thinking about work, not talking about work, and not reading for work. As self-proclaimed workaholics who actually loved our work and loved talking to each other about our businesses and what we could be doing better, this was HARD! When we finally landed on this as our “North Star,” it changed the way our family operated and really shifted how and what decisions we made as a family. But this 2000 Free Days goal implies so much more: it means that our businesses needed to be self-managing, that we are financially able to take on more free days, that our marriage is strong enough to spend that much time together, and that we've figured out the kids' school situation to allow flexibility of being away so often. When we look at everything in our lives through the lens of our Decade Dream, we are able to say yes to more things that actually support this dream and filter out ideas and other commitments that don't support this shared goal. It has served as an incredible catalyst for growth in our lives.

Do you have a favorite story about a major career development?

I chose to become a lawyer because I wanted to be an advocate for others. As I became more tenured in my legal career, I realized that my true calling was to equip and empower others with the tools they need to live their life by design. So in 2019, I pivoted away from the practice of law, and founded Mpowered Journey.

Ann is Founder & CEO of Mpowered Journey. Visit www.mpoweredjourney.com.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD



PUNAM KAJI BAINS

Chair - 2018

What has APIS meant to you?

APIS is more than a legal networking organization or a part of the Bar—it is a community with a longstanding tradition of creating space for APA attorneys. For me, it has been a place where I've found mentors and supporters, people who cheer for me, and who I could call on if needed. My career took me from Dallas to Fort Worth to Houston and back to DFW - the statewide relationships from APIS allowed me to feel connected everywhere. I got involved with APIS as a young attorney, jumping in when new leadership was needed after having attended the conference as a first-year attorney. Ann Sheu invited me to get involved and I eagerly said yes. My year as Chair was a highlight of my legal career. My hope for

APIS is that as the APA legal community grows, APIS remains an anchor, grounding us all in our history as APA attorneys in Texas, and that APIS remains an umbrella, bringing the many APA bar associations together.

What are your hobbies and would they have made an alternative career?

I have lots! I enjoy cooking and dining out (with an IG food blog @eatsbyPK). During election cycles, I manage and host a podcast for a nonpartisan nonprofit (@WiseUpTX). I love to read (prefer a physical book). I grew up singing and dancing, now I love to watch my niece at her dance competitions and listen to new music cover to cover. I like to get outside when I can. I enjoy a good workout. I love playing with my baby as a new mom. But, I wouldn't turn these activities into a career - they are pure pleasure and joy.

How have you measured success in your legal career?

I established early on that my legal career is a means to an end. The End is: the ability to wield power to help others, the financial means to donate my earnings and build generational wealth, and a life that leaves time for rest, family, and fun. I can regularly look back at my career and measure how I am doing in these areas - it may have nothing to do with my performance review or my litigation docket, but it helps me know I am successful in my career. When I am off balance, I adjust and remember what this career is about for me.

Advice to new or transitioning attorneys?

"Your career is a jungle gym. Not a ladder." When I met Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor, she said this was the most helpful advice she could give a young lawyer. A career misstep could lead to a new path.

Punam is Senior Legal Counsel with Fidelity Investments.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD



CHI REECE

Chair - 2019

Your dreams for APIS?

I hope APIS can quadruple its membership and presence in the next 25 years. APIS provides such an amazing network for mentoring, business development, and camaraderie. I am always amazed when I meet an APA attorney who does not know about APIS. APIS certainly deserves more exposure with and involvement from the APA attorney community all over Texas and not just the three major metroplexes (Austin, DFW, and Houston).

Shoutouts to personal role model(s)?

Albert Li has been a mentor for me over the years. I first met him when I was at UT Law and over the years, he has urged me to become active in both APIS and the Austin AABA. He also took time to advise me through a legal matter for a client years ago when I felt like I was in over my head. I also want to give a shout out to Judge Peter Sakai who was the first judge that I ever felt comfortable speaking with! I met him at an APIS conference (of course!) and I was pleasantly surprised at how friendly he was and still is, and it made me realize that judges were just like us.

What are your hobbies?

I have always loved cooking and eating! I love watching cooking shows and learning about new cuisines and cultures through food. One of my first trips as an adult was to NYC and I distinctly remember picking locations based on dining choices. This ties in well to my hospitality law practice where I work with a lot of restaurants and bars. I don't think I have the physical and mental endurance to cook professionally. I'm ok being on the sidelines providing the legal support for the creative chefs and entrepreneurs!

Greatest accomplishment in your legal career?

Ironically, it was quitting a job very early in my legal career without another job lined up. It was terrifying at first not knowing how I would survive, but at that time, I knew I needed to grow and needed mentoring and unfortunately, I was not getting those. Quitting forced me to become flexible and focus on what I liked doing as a lawyer. I also learned to value myself and my time.

Advice for new lawyers?

I recommend getting out there and doing things. Sitting in your office and then going straight home may be your thing, but you will rarely find new opportunities in your office or at home. You have to go to events – and you will figure out which organizations make you feel at home.

Chi is a partner with Vela Wood. Visit www.velawood.com to learn more.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD**PAUL YIN***Chair - 2020***What has APIS meant for you?**

APIS was a space that allowed me to network and get to know other AAPI attorneys from across the state. I chose to volunteer and give back as an officer because of the many great mentors and attorneys who came before me and gave their time to help other AAPI attorneys grow in their careers.

Do you have any personal role models or mentors you'd like to give a shoutout to?

Too many. All of the APIS Council members are generous with their time and advice. I will give a special shoutout to Chi Reece who made me feel welcomed when I first moved to Austin and always made time to text or chat and introduced me to cool places around town and awesome people.

How do you define culture in a world where everyone claims to have the best culture? What do you look for when joining or forming a team?

Culture starts at the top and kindness is very underrated in the legal field. If the leadership is kind and secure with themselves, there will be room for people to learn and grow, and more than enough credit to go around.

What's one piece of advice you'd give to new attorneys or those transitioning to a new role?

Ask what you want out of your career and then ask for those opportunities or roles. You can't always control the timing, but a good organization will work with you to keep you happy and motivated.

Paul is a senior attorney with the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD



JIM THOMAS

Chair - 2021

What has APIS meant to you and why have you served?

APIS has provided me an opportunity to connect with other APA attorneys in a more meaningful way, as compared to other APA associations. I love connecting with APA attorneys across the state and sharing a safe space to discuss APA challenges and learn about unique solutions to those challenges from different perspectives and different local practices. Serving as an officer and eventual Chair gave me an opportunity to work closely with the best attorneys in Texas and gain valuable

leadership experience.

I hope that APIS continues to provide opportunities for younger APA attorneys to connect with former APIS leaders so that future APA leaders avoid certain obstacles that previous generations may have faced.

Do you have a(any) personal role model(s) or mentor(s) you'd like to give a shoutout to?

I would never have known about APIS or been encouraged to spend time getting to know the great attorneys at APIS without the invaluable mentorship that I have received from the beginning of my career by another former APIS Chair, Andrea Tran.

Andrea has really helped me understand the challenges that I will have to face and gave me the tools to continue to progress in my career despite a variety of obstacles. I also couldn't have been prepared to be an APIS Chair without watching the magnificent leadership skills of Punam Kaji. Punam invited me to apply to be an officer and I really learned what a great APIS leader looks like from working directly with Punam as part of her officer board.

What has been the greatest accomplishment in your legal career?

I was honored to be voted into the partnership at my firm. Given the lack of APA attorneys represented in the partnership ranks, I personally felt validated as an attorney by my peers after being voted into the partnership.

What do you notice about the most successful attorneys?

I notice that the most successful attorneys are confident in their abilities after working extremely hard to hone in on their skills. Hard work and perseverance creates genuine confidence and will lead to continued, sustainable success.

Jim is a partner with Fletcher Yoder. Visit www.fyiplaw.com.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD



AMAR RAVAL

Chair - 2022

Talk to us about APIS.

Growing up, I didn't know any lawyers, let alone any who looked like me. After law school, the challenge of networking doubled when I left my law school alumni area. APIS felt like home – a place to meet lawyers from around the state, from various practice areas, from various firms and companies. It continues to feel like home, and I look forward to every meeting. Over the next 25 years, I would like to see APIS grow in size that better represents our overall population. Currently, API lawyers make up about 2% of the Bar but the community exceeds 5% of the state population. We need to encourage the next generation of lawyers and beyond. We need to make sure our voice is always heard. We need to let the public know we are not some party punchline – because we are proud to be lawyers.

Do you have a role model you'd like to give a shoutout to?

There are some people who you come across in life where you know that you will be challenged and be forever improved for having met them. Jim Plummer is that person for me. I met him while awaiting bar results. When I returned months later without a job, he immediately hired me. I have never been the same. Jim has been my mentor, my father figure, my friend, and my colleague. I learned how to practice law, how to treat opposing counsel, judges, people at the courthouse, or anyone he ran into as a friend. He taught me how to practice law fearlessly. Within two years of practice, I second chaired two-week trials with him where I saw firsthand his fearless style of cross examination and his persuasive arguments. Each time, he sacrificed everything else in his life to the law. His passion to do the right thing has inspired me to take a case from the start and not stop until there is a just result for the client.

Best advice to new attorneys?

Get out there and meet people! Networking always intimidated me because I used to see more seasoned lawyers and judges whom I only knew by reputation, comparing their giant achievements against my lack of them. (Don't do that!) Let people know who you are and what you are about. Yes, we are lawyers, but we are people first. Make the basic connection with someone else before you start asking, "Where do you work"? You will find that you build deeper, more meaningful connections. Most importantly, go to APIS events! I guarantee you will find friendly smiles and approachable people eager to get to know you.

Amar Raval is a named partner with Berg Plummer Johnson & Raval. Visit www.bergplummer.com for more information.

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD**PHIL KIM***Chair - 2023*

Thank you for chairing APIS this year! What are your hopes for APIS after you depart this year?

My hope is that APIS will be exponentially bigger and better than it is today. We have come a long way in the last 25 years; however with the continued growth we see in Texas, we have an opportunity to make APIS a leading organization where Asian American attorneys can call home and network in a unique way.

What kind of volunteer work do you value and what special meaning does that work hold for you?

I value any volunteer work that serves the underprivileged and underserved within our respective communities. Many of us entered the legal industry in hopes of making a positive impact on society, and we have inimitable skill sets and platforms that allow us to do just that. We owe it to both the generations that have come before us and that will come after us to do more than just seek out a better future for our own individual careers and families.

How do you define culture in a world where everyone claims to have the best culture? What do you look for when joining or forming a team?

Culture is difficult to define or quantify, but my goal is to create an atmosphere where people can ultimately feel valued and safe to be themselves. I look for authenticity and a team-oriented mentality when trying to cultivate a group striving towards the same common goal.

What's one piece of advice you'd give to new attorneys or those transitioning to a new role?

As important as your career is to your life, your job should never define all of who you are.

Phil is a partner at Sheppard Mullin. Visit www.sheppardmullin.com for more information on Phil!

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD



SABA SYED

Chair-Elect for 2024

APIS has meant genuine friendships with people I respect and admire. I remember when now-current APIS chair Phil Kim contacted me about serving as an APIS officer. With his encouragement, along with former APIS chair Punam Kaji, I stepped into APIS leadership during COVID. APIS looked a little different during the pandemic, but it was still full of dynamic, intelligent, and passionate lawyers. I was (and continue to be) blown away by the caliber of people I get to meet through APIS. Three years after joining APIS as an officer, it is joyful to reunite in-person with the APIS family.

Do you have role models or mentors you'd like to recognize?

My role model is Corey Borner, who is the son of the office manager at my firm. Corey was paralyzed in a routine football practice over 10 years ago. Rather than taking this injury as proof of life's unfairness, he has become the source of constant inspiration for me and so many others. He stays positive in the face of life's difficulties, keeps the faith, and never gives up. I cherish him as a human, and am grateful for his legacy.

How do you define culture in a world where everyone claims to have the best culture?

The best advice I received about identifying a group's culture is to listen to the war stories. In any group, the members will share stories that inspire them, concern them, or make them laugh. The culture is built into the shared stories and collective memory of the group. I don't think there is a "best culture," in the way that there is not a "best relationship." But I do believe a culture can be healthy, growth-minded, and supportive. In being a part of APIS, I have identified a culture of kindness, encouragement, and joy. It's a beautiful thing to find good people.

What is your "North Star" when you wear different hats (e.g., lawyer, family member, community member, etc.) – is it always the same or different?

My "North Star" is total presence. Each time I put on a different hat, I try to be fully present for that role. To me, this means truly listening, paying attention, and focusing on the task at hand. And, when all else fails, my North Star is my husband, who always has the best advice and somehow always knows the right next move.

What is one hope you have for APIS?

Twenty-five years ago, APIS had an understandably small membership. With changing Texas demographics, more Asian lawyers are entering the legal field and looking for a resource to help them connect with other lawyers, grow their practices, help them deal with the unique challenges of being an Asian lawyer, and build lifelong friendships. I believe APIS serves that role and I am excited for more attorneys to benefit as much as I have.

Saba is a partner at Bell Nunnally & Martin (www.bellnunnally.com).

25 Years Together: LEARNING FROM PAST CHAIRS AND LOOKING AHEAD

We would also like to thank the following past chairs for their selfless dedication of time and energy to lead, grow, and nurture the APIS membership over the years.



CATHERINE LE
Chair- 2016



ANDREA E. TRAN
Chair - 2008



RUSSELL WONG
Chair - 2005

History of APIS and Affiliate Profiles



APIS was established to advocate the common professional interests of lawyers of Asian-Pacific Islander heritage in Texas and those lawyers having an interest in the affairs of the Asian community and the law of countries on the Pacific Rim. In addition, the Section seeks to utilize the legal skills of its members to promote Asian interests and concerns in both public and private forums throughout the State of Texas.

The Section strives to address Texas Asian legal concerns in order to heighten public awareness of how such legal issues can affect every facet of life in Texas. Formed in 1995, the Asian Pacific Interest Section (APIS) of the State Bar of Texas was created to be a statewide umbrella organization to promote the common professional interests of lawyers of and interested in Asian-Pacific American heritage, community and culture in Texas.

The Section strives to address Texas Asian legal concerns in order to heighten public awareness of how such legal issues can affect every facet of life in Texas. Formed in 1995, the Asian Pacific Interest Section (APIS) of the State Bar of Texas was created to be a statewide umbrella organization to promote the common professional interests of lawyers of and interested in Asian-Pacific American heritage, community and culture in Texas.



Asian American Bar Association of Houston (AABA Houston)

The Asian American Bar Association of Houston (AABA) is a voluntary organization of attorneys, judges, and law students of Asian heritage or who have Asian American interests. Founded in 1984, the AABA's membership reflects all aspects of Houston's Asian American legal community. In coordinating social events, continuing legal education, and pro bono and volunteer opportunities, the AABA promotes the Houston society of Asian American lawyers and addresses the needs of Houston's Asian American community.



South Asian Bar Association of Houston (SABA Houston)

The South Asian Bar Association of Houston (SABA Houston) is dedicated to the needs, concerns, and interests of lawyers of South Asian heritage by promoting the professional development of the South Asian legal community through networking, advocacy, and mentoring. SABA Houston is also dedicated to ensuring the civil liberties of and the provision of legal services to the South Asian community in Houston by educating the Houston South Asian community about our legal system and encouraging greater participation by the South Asian community in the legal profession and American government.

History of APIS and Affiliate Profiles



Austin Asian American Bar Association (Austin AABA)

Founded in 2006, the Austin Asian American Bar Association seeks to serve the mutual professional, social, mentoring, and community interests of Asian American lawyers and lawyers with interest in the Austin Asian American community.



Austin South Asian Bar Association (Austin SABA)

The South Asian Bar Association of Austin (SABA Austin) is dedicated to the advancement and development of South Asian attorneys as well as attorneys interested in issues affecting the South Asian community. SABA Austin strives to promote the professional development of South Asian lawyers and law students, educate the community about relevant legal issues, expand and enhance business and professional opportunities for South Asians, increase the participation of South Asians in civic affairs and government, facilitate the exchange of ideas and information, and foster goodwill, fellowship and unity among the community.



Dallas Asian American Bar Association (DAABA)

The Dallas Asian American Bar Association ("DAABA") is a 350+ member legal organization created for the benefit of Asian- American attorneys, law students, and other legal professionals located in the DFW metroplex. DAABA's core purpose is to advocate for the interest of Asian American attorneys and promote the professional growth and good community standing of its members. DAABA is one of the fastest growing bar associations in the area. As of 2015, approximately 67% of the self- identified Asian American attorneys practicing in Dallas County were DAABA members.



Dallas South Asian Bar Association (SABA Dallas)

SABA Dallas is dedicated to creating strong relationships among South Asian lawyers in the local area. Through networking, mentoring, and advocacy, the organization's goals are to build the strongest group of attorneys in the DFW region. SABA Dallas is also dedicated to ensuring that our attorneys provide the highest level of service and professionalism to those in need of legal assistance.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2023 APIS AWARD WINNERS

**Affiliate of the Year Award: South Asian Bar Association of Houston ("SABA Houston")**

This award recognizes an affiliate of the Asian Pacific Interest Section of the State Bar that has made great accomplishments through membership, affiliate and professional development, community involvement, and support of APIS.

The South Asian Bar Association of Houston (SABA Houston) is a local chapter of the South Asian Bar Association of North America and serves as the regional voice for the South Asian legal community in Houston. SABA Houston is dedicated to the needs, concerns, and interests of lawyers of South Asian heritage by promoting the professional development of the South Asian legal community through networking, advocacy, and mentoring. SABA Houston is also dedicated to ensuring the civil liberties of and the provision of legal services to the South Asian community in Houston by educating the Houston South Asian community about our legal system and encouraging greater participation by the South Asian community in the legal profession and American government.

**Justice David Wellington Chew Award: Lisa S. Tsai**

The Asian Pacific Interest Section (APIS) Justice David Wellington Chew Award is the highest honor awarded by APIS every year, recognizing the outstanding achievements, commitment, and leadership of a lawyer who has paved the way for the advancement of other Asian Pacific American (APA) attorneys.

Established in 2002, the Award was named after Justice Chew, former Chief Justice of the Eighth Court of Appeals and one of the first Asian Pacific Americans in the Texas judiciary. Award recipients demonstrate vision, courage, and tenacity in their practice, and they have made substantial and lasting contributions to the APA legal profession, as well as the broader APA community.

Lisa Tsai is the Managing Partner of Reid Collins & Tsai. Lisa has represented plaintiffs in a wide variety of complex business disputes, including financial fraud cases, legal malpractice actions, fiduciary duty litigation, intellectual property litigation, and securities and shareholder derivative lawsuits.

Following a lengthy jury trial and bench trial, Lisa obtained a Top 50 Verdict in the United States against global investment bank Credit Suisse for fraud, which was affirmed after several rounds of appeals. Among her many industry accolades, Lisa has been named to the Best Lawyers in America for her work with private funds and hedge funds, as well as the LawDragon 500 Leading Lawyers in America, which recognizes the most elite lawyers in the profession. Lisa has also been recognized as one of the country's Top 250 Women in Litigation by Benchmark Litigation.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2023 APIS AWARD WINNERS

**Pro Bono Award: H. C. Chang**

The Asian Pacific Interest Section (APIS) Pro Bono Award seeks to recognize an attorney or a team of attorneys for outstanding achievements in pro bono service that involved impactful litigation or other legal assistance to advance or protect civil rights or provided direct legal services to individuals in furtherance of the administration of legal and social justice.

H.C. Chang is an experienced civil litigator who has handled every aspect of a lawsuit. H.C. is well versed in tort actions and has handled a variety of lawsuits, ranging from medical malpractice, motor vehicle accidents, and other forms of personal injury. H. C. has also prosecuted and defended individuals, companies, and business entities in various commercial lawsuits and ADR actions. In addition to litigation, H.C. has appellate experience in both state and federal courts.

**Champion of Diversity Award: Caren Lock**

This award recognizes an attorney or a team of attorneys for outstanding achievement in pro bono service involving impactful litigation or other legal assistance to advance or protect the civil rights of individuals in furtherance of legal and social justice.

Caren K. Lock is the Regional Vice President and Associate General Counsel of TIAA. In her role at TIAA, Caren is the primary interface for the company on all legislative, executive, administrative, and regulatory matters in the southwest and mountain regions. She also directs all legislative lobbying and regulatory advocacy in her states. At the company, Caren is active in gender and racial diversity initiatives.

She was the former Corporate Co-Chair of the Women's Employee Resource Group and is currently a member of the Denver/Broomfield Leadership Council and Dallas Leadership Council. Importantly, Caren co-founded The Orchid Giving Circle that provides community grants to support social change and services to the DFW Asian Community.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2023 APIS AWARD WINNERS**Outstanding Mentor Award: Judge Christine Vinh Weems**

The Asian Pacific Interest Section (APIS) Outstanding Mentor Award is awarded to a lawyer in Texas who has consistently demonstrated a commitment to mentoring young lawyers in his or her legal community.

This award recognizes a lawyer who has consistently demonstrated a commitment to mentoring young lawyers in his or her legal community by serving as a role model, fostering the development of young lawyers, and contributing to the profession and community.

Judge Christine Weems is a double board-certified trial attorney in both Personal Injury Trial Law and Civil Trial Law with a wide range of experience representing individuals as well as multinational corporations in litigation. In 2018, Judge Weems was elected to be only the sixth judge of the 281st Civil Judicial District Court bench. Since taking the bench, she has presided over 50 jury trials including safely conducting over ten in-person jury trials during the pandemic.

Judge Weems has recently been made a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates, an invitation-only organization of experienced trial lawyers and judges dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the civil jury trial right provided by the Seventh Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. She was recently awarded the Honorary Alum award by the University of Houston Law Center's Alumni Association for her work with the mock trial team. Christine also had the Spring 2021 pledge class of Alpha Phi Omega at the University of Texas at Austin named after her for her commitment to the community.

Best Under 40 Award - Heaven Chee, Hanna Kim, and Mansi Rodgers

The Asian Pacific Interest Section (APIS) Best Lawyers Under 40 Award recognizes talented individuals within the Asian Pacific American (APA) legal community under the age of 40 who have achieved prominence and distinction in their fields — be it the practice of law, academia, business, civic and charitable affairs, the judiciary, or politics — and have demonstrated a strong commitment to civic or community affairs.

**Heaven Chee**

Heaven Chee joined Stop Repeating History's leadership in 2020, after having been heavily involved in the Asian American Bar Association of Houston and organizing multiple educational events on civil rights and legal history. While her practice is focused on high-stakes commercial litigation and appeals, with particular emphasis representing clients in the financial services and technology industries, she has maintained an active pro bono practice, handling matters such as Establishment Clause violation claims by would-be LGBT foster parents and Section 1983 claims by prisoners.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2023 APIS AWARD WINNERS

**HANNA KIM**

Hanna is a senior associate in the firm's Dallas office, where she focuses her practice on complex commercial litigation, insurance coverage disputes, and bad faith litigation. Hanna represents some of the world's largest insurance companies in all aspects of commercial disputes, from providing analysis to clients on coverage issues to representing clients in federal and state courts across the country. Hanna has extensive experience with all levels of litigation and dispute resolution, including discovery, fact and expert depositions, motion practice, oral argument, appraisal, mediation and trial.

Prior to joining Zelle, Hanna clerked for the Honorable Hal R. Ray, Jr. in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas. Hanna is an active member of the Dallas-Fort Worth legal community and serves on the firm's Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

**MANSI RODGERS**

Mansi is a complex commercial litigator who has over ten years' experience representing clients at the trial and appellate level. Mansi also assists clients with pre-litigation disputes, contract assessments, and other business needs. She has experience in a variety of complex civil and commercial matters involving contract disputes, negligence and other tort claims, and insurance issues.

Mansi has served as appellate support counsel in several wrongful death actions. Mansi is committed to participating in pro bono work. Prior to joining Reeves & Brightwell, Mansi began her career as a litigation associate in the New York office of Latham & Watkins LLP.

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