

Plenaries

Growing a Strong APALA

APALA has become a strong organization in our first 30 years of existence and a voice for AAPI workers in the labor movement and our communities. In this plenary, we will share about how we've been able to grow and strengthen our organization across the country by sharing what it takes to build a strong chapter and the impacts our chapters have had around the world.



Ligaya Domingo (Moderator) is the Racial Justice and Education Director at SEIU Healthcare 1199NW overseeing education, training, and development for members and staff and helps to lead the local's program in Racial Justice. She earned her PhD in Education/Social & Cultural Studies from the University of California, Berkeley and is a Community Scholar Associate with the University of Washington Labor Center. She currently serves as the 1st Vice President on the APALA National Executive board, APALA Seattle Chapter board, Martin Luther King Labor Council, and the Workforce Development Council of Seattle – King County. She is also Secretary and Trustee for the SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multi-Employer Training Fund.



Katherine "Kat" General is currently the Field Director at the International Federation of Professional Technical Engineers (IFPTE) Local 21 representing professional and technical employees in areas throughout the Bay Area and has served the APALA San Francisco's Chapter President since 2021. She has represented working people on the streets, at the bargaining table, and trained new union leaders for over 20 years in the labor movement. After graduating from San Francisco State University with a degree in Asian American Studies and Journalism, Kat was recruited to attend the AFL-CIO's Organizing Institute where she was mentored by seasoned organizers from APALA. It was not only the technical skills that she learned from her APALA mentors that are attributed to Kat's accomplishments, but more importantly the encouragement and support she received to stick with labor, especially when the path became difficult to walk. Kat's contributions to the movement were recognized by APALA as the 2019 recipient of the Art Takei Leadership Award.



Wei Chen is the Civic Engagement Coordinator and Chinese Youth Organizing Project Coordinator at Asian Americans United. When Wei first arrived in the U.S, he faced racism and anti-immigrant discrimination. In 2008 and 2009, Wei was one of the leaders of the South Philadelphia High student organizing, whose anti-bias and racial healing work during that struggle has won national acclaim. He helped form the South Philadelphia High Chinese Student Association and eventually led a major boycott of the school for more than eight days following persistent anti-Asian/anti-immigrant harassment. In 2014, Wei founded Chinatown Vote. He was one of ten people nationally awarded a Peace First Prize fellowship to continue his organizing against bias and harassment. In 2015, he was appointed by the Mayor of Philadelphia to serve as Commissioner of Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations. In 2020 co-founded API PA, Pennsylvania's first Asian focused 501(c)4.



Eunice How is the APALA Seattle chapter president and a lead community and political organizer with UNITE HERE Local 8. She previously worked in the boycott and organizing teams and has been on staff since 2013. She represents UNITE HERE on the APALA National Executive Board. She is a member of University Lutheran Church-Seattle (ELCA). She earned a Bachelor's degree in Public Health with a minor in Geography from the University of Washington. She is the proud daughter of Chinese Malaysians and was raised in Illinois and Singapore.



Qing Wei is an organizer with Unite Here Local 26 and the President of the Massachusetts APALA Chapter. As a housekeeper and shop steward at her hotel, she helped lead over 1,000 hotel workers out on strike in Boston for 46 days as part of the nationwide Marriott Strike in 2018. She currently organizes non-union hospitality workers in Boston, and works to develop the leadership of rank & file immigrant workers in their unions and communities.

Plenaries

Seattle History

Seattle's long labor history reflects the overall struggle to broaden the labor movement and confront its own role in perpetuating racism and specifically, anti-Asian hate. AAPI labor has been fighting for justice for all Seattle workers dating back decades. This plenary highlights the history of Pacific Northwest AAPI workers struggles, including the historic Alaskan cannery workers struggles, and situates the current contract fight at the Embassy Suites.



Tracy Lai (Moderator) is a Professor of History, Ethnic and Women Studies instructor at Seattle Central College and currently serves as the Vice President of the APALA Seattle Chapter. She is a member of national AFT's Civil and Human Rights committee, and co-chairs national AFT's Asian American and Pacific Islander Task force. Tracy's scholarship includes co-authoring a book with Michael Liu and Kim Geron titled, *The Snake Dance of Asian American Activism: Community, Vision and Power*, an analysis of the Asian American movement. She also co-authored several articles with APALA members that appear in *AAPI Nexus* (UCLA journal) on AAPI workers, as well as exposing students to the labor movement through service-learning with union campaigns. Tracy collaborated with Kent Wong, Kim Geron, Emmelle Israel and Julie Monroe on a history of APALA through oral histories: *Asian American Workers Rising: APALA's Struggle to Transform the Labor Movement* in celebration of APALA's 30th anniversary.



Moon-Ho Jung is Professor of History and the Harry Bridges Endowed Chair in Labor Studies at the University of Washington. He is the author of *Menace to Empire: Anticolonial Solidarities and the Transpacific Origins of the US Security State* (2022), winner of the David Montgomery Award from the Organization of American Historians and the Theodore Saloutos Book Award from the Immigration and Ethnic History Society, and author of *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (2006).



Kent Wong is the director of the UCLA Labor Center where he teaches Labor Studies and Ethnic Studies and is currently a vice-president of the California Federation of Teachers. Before joining the UCLA Labor Center, Kent worked as staff attorney for the Service Employees International Union in Los Angeles and was the first staff attorney for Asian Americans Advancing Justice in Los Angeles. Kent served as the founding President of the APALA. Kent has been at the forefront of global labor initiatives, published more than a dozen books on the labor movement, immigrant rights, popular education, and the Asian American community and also taught the first class in the country on the issue of undocumented students. He launched "Dream Summer," the first national fellowship program for undocumented youth that has been in existence for 12 years.



Richard Gurtiza is currently on the visiting committee of the University of Washington Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies and is Co-Chair of the Board of Directors of the ILWU's Waterfront Federal Credit Union. Rich was a founding member of APALA's first steering committee and was elected the first National Secretary / Treasurer of APALA. Rich was born in Yakima, Washington, and raised on a 160 acre farm in the Yakima Valley. He graduated from Wapato High School and received this Bachelor of Arts and Masters in Public Administration from the University of Washington. He has resided in the Seattle area since 1976. He retired as Regional Director of the Alaska Cannery Workers Union, ILWU/IBU Region 37 after 28 years. He was also the past President of the Filipino American Political Action Group of Washington.



Liza Cruz is a housekeeper at the Embassy Suites Pioneer Square Hotel and a leader at UNITE HERE Local 8. Originally from the Philippines, she comes from a family of union and pro-democracy organizers. In 2018, she led her hotel to organize with the Union. She is a graduate of APALA's Emerging Leaders Transformation program. She lives with her mother in Seattle and has two daughters and one granddaughter.

Plenaries

Our Rights Under Attack Across the Globe

Workers around the world have been impacted by the growing wealth of the corporate elite. In this plenary, organizers will share their stories and experiences about the struggles that AAPI workers around the world are facing, how it is challenging our rights, and how we are organizing to ensure that AAPI workers have a voice and power.



Jessica Tang (Moderator) is currently serving as APALA's National Treasurer, and is President of the Boston Teachers Union, representing over 10,000 active and retired educators. She is the first person of color, first openly queer and first woman in over thirty years to serve in this role. She is a co-founder of the Teacher Activist Group-Boston, Boston Education Justice Alliance and Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance, and she serves as a board member for several civic and labor groups including Citizens for Public Schools, Private Industry Council, Boston Partners in Education, and Parent Teacher Home Visit Project. She is also the first and only AAPI member to serve on the American Federation of Teachers Executive Council. Jessica serves as a Vice President of both the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and American Federation of Teachers-Massachusetts, and is a former co-chair of the Massachusetts Asian-American Educators Association. As a teacher-activist, she has been involved in many different community organizations that are working to advance racial, social and economic justice. She earned her Bachelor's degree at Harvard University and holds an Ed.M. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.



Josua Mata, SENTRO is currently serving as the Secretary-General of the 80,000-strong Sentrong mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Mangagawa (SENTRO) and has been a trade unionist for more than 30 years. Mr. Mata concurrently sits on the Board of Trustees of the Labor Education and Research Network (LEARN), a workers' education association established by the trade unions. Before being elected as Secretary-General of SENTRO, Mr. Mata was the Secretary General of the Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL), Deputy Secretary General of the National Union of Workers in Hotel, Restaurant and Allied Industries (NUWHRAIN), and was an organizer-educator for the national union since 1989. He has been invited as resource person and trainer on neo-liberal globalization, anti-WTO campaigns, social movement unionism, and comprehensive trade union issues in at least 20 countries. Josua holds a BS in Architecture and a BA in Geography at the University of the Philippines.



Osa Tui Jr, HSTA is currently serving as the President of the Hawai'i State Teachers Association. He started his career in education in 1998 as a math teacher, then school registrar. He has been president of the Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) since July 2021 and represents 13,500 Hawai'i public school educators. A number of recent HSTA accomplishments include the realignment of salaries to correspond to service years, a newly ratified four-year contract, the creation of a Hawaiian Education Special Committee, and the initiation of partnerships to recruit local students into the teaching profession. HSTA continues to work on issues including educator housing and meeting internal ethnic diversity representation for the association.



Sabrina Liu is the President and co-founder of APALA's Pittsburgh Chapter and has been serving on APALA's National Executive Board since 2017. She has been a campaigner and researcher in the United Steelworkers (USW) union since 2014. She is the Assistant Director of the USW Strategic Campaigns Department. She works with USW members to build power against corporate greed during contract negotiations and labor disputes and conducts leverage research for organizing campaigns. Sabrina is a native of Taipei, Taiwan. She also serves on the boards of Pittsburgh United and Casa San José, a grassroots organization celebrating Latino culture, welcoming immigrants, and embracing inclusion, dignity, and respect.



Peter Kuel is currently serving as the President of the Drivers Union, an organization that represents 40,000 drivers statewide in Washington. He began organizing his fellow Uber and Lyft drivers in Seattle after drivers began to see their pay routinely cut and faced termination without reason or recourse in 2014. With the support of Teamsters 117, Seattle drivers won unprecedented victories and built their own workers' organization which developed into the Drivers Union. The Drivers Union has one of the strongest labor protections for Rideshare Drivers in the country. We help drivers with issues of fair pay, termination protections, benefits such as sick/pay leave, unemployment, family/medical leave and workman's compensation among other services. He is a human rights activist and is the President of South Sudan International Advocacy for Human Rights.



Justine Lim is currently leading the Asian American Racial Justice Project at the UCLA Labor Center, where she actively works to build the capacity of undocumented Asian and Pacific Islander (API) immigrants through creative storytelling, leadership development, and cross-racial solidarity work. Her passion for immigrant rights and labor advocacy stems from the injustice her mother experienced as an undocumented worker. In 2022, Justine graduated summa cum laude from UCLA with B.A.s in Labor Studies and Political Science. This fall, she will be continuing her educational journey at UC Irvine School of Law on a full-tuition scholarship, where she aspires to become a labor and employment attorney to advocate for undocumented workers. Last year, Justine served as a Dream Summer fellow with APALA and the UCLA Labor Center and co-founded Empowering API, an organization dedicated to uplifting undocumented API voices and building community.

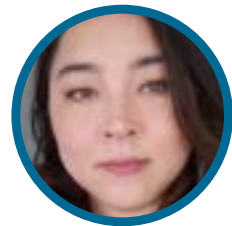


Nadia Nisha Belkin is the first Executive Director of the Asian American Power Network. Prior to this role, Nadia served not only as the National Deputy Field Director but as the Colorado State Director at America Votes. In both positions, she facilitated the development of electoral plans and long-term power building in the progressive issue advocacy arena. Growing up in Colorado, Nadia has invested in the state and strengthened civic engagement statewide. As the Communications Director at the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado, she developed grassroots trainings and focused on mobilizing faith communities to become activists in their community and in the state legislature around racial, economic, and social justice issues. As an Indian-American Muslim woman, Nadia has worked to elevate the voices and profiles of people of color. She remains professionally focused on producing innovative and strategic ideas which will cultivate relationships within the progressive community across multiple audiences.

Plenaries

When We Fight, We Win

The labor movement is growing. Workers have had enough from greedy bosses, especially with the struggles that have surfaced during the pandemic, and they are fighting back. In this plenary, organizers will share their campaign and creative strategies that AAPI workers have utilized to organize, win and strengthen AAPI collective power.



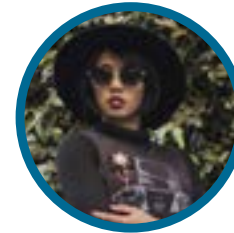
Mikayla Vu (Moderator) is a Servicing Representative for UAW Region 9A located in Massachusetts, a member of NOLSW-UAW Local 2320 and is currently the Chair of APALA Young Leaders Council. She also serves as a Massachusetts AFL-CIO Vice President representing the UAW. She is a second-generation bi-racial Korean American who grew up in Michigan and has been a UAW member for over 5 years since her time as a graduate student worker at Boston College, where she worked with her colleagues to organize and form the Boston College Graduate Employees Union-UAW. She helped organize and win a successful NLRB election at Boston College. Mikayla holds a Master's degree in History with fields in U.S. Immigration and Asian American history.



Angel Sherburne is currently an Environmental Service Trainer at Swedish Medical Center in Seattle. She is certified in CHEST and Advanced Certification for EVS Technicians (ACET) and also a trainer who mentors other EVS workers. She is a member, delegate, Racial Justice Committee member, and an Executive Board Member of SEIU Healthcare 1199NW. Angel is an EVS leader and certified healthcare environmental technician service trainer with 25 years of expertise in housekeeping including her supervisory and lead position in the Philippines. Her passion is to help the EVS to educate how to do the right process of cleaning and to control the spread of infection, especially now that there is a pandemic. She continues to help EVS workers fight for their rights and educate them to utilize safety at their job which is critical for AAPI workers.



Swasthika Arulingam is the President of the United Federation of Labour and an Attorney-at-Law. As a unionist and an Attorney-at-Law, she has been part of movements and coalitions which have advocated for better working conditions and a living wage for workers. She has also been a longtime advocate against anti terror laws in Sri Lanka which has been used by consecutive Governments to repress Tamil and Muslim minority communities in Sri Lanka.



Relle Partido is a dedicated organizer for Starbucks Workers United, whose unwavering commitment to the labor movement has had a significant impact on the lives of countless Starbucks employees. For the past seven months, Relle has been a part of the movement, fighting tirelessly to empower workers at the Starbucks Reserve Roastery in Seattle. With an unyielding belief in the power of collective action, Relle has played a key role in advocating for fair wages, improved working conditions, and essential benefits for baristas and other staff members. Their ability to inspire and mobilize fellow workers has been instrumental in fostering solidarity and unity among Siren Retail and Starbucks employees, as they strive to create a workplace where everyone's voices are heard and valued. In the face of corporate challenges and adversity, Relle remains a bright and friendly spirit to her coworkers, embodying the spirit of solidarity and justice in their pursuit of a more equitable and empowered workforce.



Paula Isla-McGill is the AFA-CWA Alaska Airlines Council 19 President in Seattle, WA. Paula Isla-McGill grew up in the Seattle-area after immigrating from the Philippines as a young girl in 1989. She earned her bachelors degree in Architectural Studies from the University of Washington and worked primarily in healthcare design prior to becoming a Flight Attendant in 2017. She is passionate about educating her fellow flight attendants about all parts of their contract to prepare for an informed vote on their first fully-negotiated contract in 9 years. She is proud to advocate for comprehensive improvements for all seniority levels and is excited to mobilize a work group who is no longer willing to accept the industry status quo and fight for fair wages and common sense work rules that properly values all of their time.



Johanna Puno Hester is currently the Assistant Executive Director of the United Domestic Workers of America/AFSCME, Local 3930 representing more than 145,000 home care and child care providers in California. She is also an elected AFSCME International Vice President, Vice-President for the California Labor Federation and a Housing Commissioner for the City of San Diego Housing Commission. Today, Johanna serves as the Vice Chair of the Child Care Providers United, a statewide union made up of SEIU and UDW/AFSCME. Family child care providers have been fighting for their rights to collectively bargain for over 17 years before finally winning full rights in a legislation signed by Governor Newsom. The spirit of these providers, most of whom are immigrants and women of color continue to inspire her. Johanna completed the Senior Executives in State and Local Government program at the Harvard Kennedy School and is currently a Fellow of the Mel King Community Fellows Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) CoLab.