



# Celebrating 30 Years of APPEAL

*Moving Toward Transformative Leadership  
and Change for Our Communities*





*OUR MISSION: To champion  
social justice and achieve equity  
and empowerment for Asian  
Americans, Native Hawaiians, and  
Pacific Islanders by supporting  
and mobilizing community-led  
movements through advocacy and  
leadership development on critical  
public health issues.*

*OUR VISION: Towards health  
equity and justice*



**APPEAL**

# *Transformative Leadership...*

(as defined by APPEAL Champions)

*embodies all the ideals we seek and need in our leaders, but often fail to see.*

Are change agents that *do not accept the status quo and constantly seek new ways to improve individually, and collectively as a society with a north star being health equity and social justice.*

Is about *channeling that love and hope* and taking the long view to recreate systems designed for all of us to thrive – for all of us *to live with full dignity and rights.*

Is about leaders who can weave together perspectives and help people find common ground.  
***We need leaders who can invite rather than demand,***  
create spaces for growth rather than just plans for growth.

is about *inspiring, motivating, being forward facing* and playing the long game. Real change takes planning, time, and vision.

is based in the Samoan principle “**o le ala i le pule o le tautua,**” meaning that the leadership is achieved and enacted through service.

Is also called *servant leadership*, which encompasses the ideal of service that has attracted individuals like me to government civil service since JFK. *Rather than a master over people, such a leader is a servant of the people*, who actively and willingly contribute to developing their team.



Embodies a deep sense of personal agency, ancestral roots, and way of being in community. Whether we are alone, within an organization, in community or operating across systems...*we are transforming internally, interpersonally, and structurally to advance health and justice.*

Means understanding that we as individuals need others to build community, build a field, build a strong powerful force for change. *Together we are more effective than when we work separately.* The public health field had to listen to the needs of marginalized communities because we spoke with a single voice, a multi-ethnic, multiracial and inclusive voice where all of us mentioned those who were not at the table.

is when people accept and espouse this idea becoming the status quo, ***where collaboration, not competition, becomes the norm***, and the collective will and well-being of a community becomes the natural priority, superseding the singular aspirations and reputation of an individual.

is encapsulated by this quote by Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, ***“a leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.”***

*means evolving in ways to meet the needs of all... and finding new ways to lead an evolving world.*

is about ***inspiring and motivating people to go above and beyond their expectations*** by building a powerful vision and building a supportive environment. The focus is on teamwork, personal development, and ***matching individual aspirations with a mission***. In my opinion that is foundational to APPEAL's work.

*Transformative Leadership is the art and action of moving individuals, communities, and systems toward positive social change.*

APPEAL 2004 (revised slightly in 2025)





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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & FOUNDER

*Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Supporters,*

Welcome to the 30th Anniversary Gala of Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership—APPEAL. We are honored to have you with us this evening as we celebrate three decades of collective action, resilience, and commitment to equity. Our theme tonight, “Moving Toward Transformative Leadership and Change for Our Communities,” reflects both our history and our vision for the future.

For 30 years, APPEAL has worked to build leadership, shape policy, and advance health equity—particularly in the areas of commercial tobacco, unhealthy foods, cancer, and other pressing health disparities. We have remained grounded in the needs of our diverse Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Asian American communities—starting with where they are at in terms of stage of community readiness..

Guided by our community readiness model, leadership development programs, and policy advocacy strategies, we’ve built a path that is strategic, intentional, and deeply collaborative. Our work has always been rooted in the belief that when communities are equipped with the right tools and resources, they have the power to lead transformative, sustainable change.

A core part of our mission has been holding industries accountable—especially those, like the tobacco industry, that have targeted our communities with harmful and deceptive marketing. Our goal is not to assign blame to individuals, but to shine a light on the systemic and corporate forces that have prioritized profit over public health. We believe in shifting the narrative from personal responsibility to collective empowerment and corporate accountability.

As we celebrate this milestone, we also acknowledge the challenges facing our communities today. We live in a time of heightened uncertainty, with policies and actions that continue



to harm the most vulnerable—especially communities of color, immigrants, and LGBTQ+ individuals. Amid this turmoil, persistent health disparities—particularly around commercial tobacco use and cancer—remain urgent and often overlooked.

At APPEAL, we understand what it means to be marginalized. We understand the importance of standing together. We know that real change takes strong coalitions, trusted partnerships, and unwavering commitment. We are deeply grateful to our community allies, partners, and supporters who have stood with us and helped sustain this movement.

We're especially proud of the nearly 2,000 leaders we've trained from five racial communities and LGBTQ+ communities through our leadership development programs. These individuals embody the strength of their lived experiences and the transformative power of solidarity across difference. As we welcome our 30th Anniversary Leadership Cohort from across the U.S. and the Pacific, we are filled with hope—for their leadership and for the futures they are already shaping.

At APPEAL, we define transformative leadership as “the art and action of moving individuals, communities, and systems toward positive social change.” Tonight, we are privileged to honor 30 extraordinary Champions and Awardees who embody this vision. These are people and organizations whose commitment to justice, equity, and health uplifts not only their own communities but the entire field.

To our community partners, academic allies, consultants, funders, current and former staff, and board members—thank you for growing the APPEAL family and helping us thrive. The road ahead will not be easy. But our history has shown that Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities are resilient. That resilience, rooted in culture, purpose, and unity, will guide us toward a brighter, more just future.

Thank you for being part of this journey—and this celebration.

*“For 30 years, APPEAL has worked to build leadership, shape policy, and advance health equity—particularly in the areas of commercial tobacco, unhealthy foods, cancer, and other pressing health disparities.”*

**Rod Lew, MPH**  
**Executive Director,**  
*Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment,  
Advocacy and Leadership*



# TIMELINE



**30<sup>th</sup>**  
1994  
2024  
ANNIVERSARY





## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Karen Ijichi Perkins has a wide range of experience working with a variety of groups as a group leader, graphic recorder, facilitator, technical advisor, and team member for business planning, work-flow analysis, marketing, training, and project management. Clients include State and county health agencies, community health centers, private health plans, foundations and non-profit community organizations. In each role, she demonstrates an understanding of group dynamics, change management, and communication processes. She has effectively applied these concepts and principles to assist clients in developing goals and objectives, formulating advocacy and policy strategies, and producing complex work products, including visual history maps and process mapping for many organizations.

Her most recent work as a graphic facilitator and recorder has focused on community engagement, meeting and conference design, conceptual graphics, and live recording for meetings and conferences.



**APPEAL**



*Congratulations from Policymakers*



**SHRI THANEDAR**  
13<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND  
SECURITY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT, INVESTIGATIONS, AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY RANKING MEMBER

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMODITY MARKETS, DIGITAL  
ASSETS, AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT



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June 4, 2025

Dear Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy, and Leadership (APPEAL),

As a Member of Congress, I'm proud to join in celebrating APPEAL's 30 years of advancing health equity for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities. From tobacco control to obesity prevention to cultivating community-based leadership, APPEAL has been a driving force in building a healthier, more just future for our community.

I am especially proud of APPEAL's commitment to capacity building, particularly among young people who play a crucial role in shaping policy and pushing for large-scale change. APPEAL's commitment to empowering the next generation of advocates ensures that the voices of our communities are not only heard but also lead the movement for equity.

The progress made would not have been possible without investments in advocacy and organizing. Federal funding has played a key role in APPEAL's ability to strengthen community infrastructure and impact, particularly in tobacco prevention and health promotion.

As we celebrate this milestone, let it also serve as a call to action: we must continue to fund and fuel community-driven solutions, reduce health disparities, and improve outcomes for underserved populations. APPEAL's legacy shows us what's possible when we invest in people, power, and purpose.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shri Thanedar".

Shri Thanedar, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress, Michigan's 13<sup>th</sup> District

JILL N. TOKUDA  
2ND DISTRICT, HAWAII

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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-1102

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AND BIOTECHNOLOGY  
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FOREIGN AGRICULTURE  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON  
THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

**Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership**  
**(APPEAL)**  
**June 23<sup>rd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

Mahalo to Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy, and Leadership (APPEAL) on 30 years of unwavering commitment to advancing health equity for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and other underserved communities. Your work in tobacco control, cancer and obesity prevention, and leadership development has been transformative in addressing the persistent health disparities affecting our communities.

As the representative of Hawai'i's Second Congressional District—home to the largest concentration of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders and one of the most rural districts in the country—I understand the importance of investing in culturally grounded, community-driven approaches to public health. Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders have too often been overlooked in data collection, underserved by policy, and misunderstood in healthcare. Addressing these disparities begins with recognizing and respecting the unique needs and characteristics of our communities.

APPEAL's work to empower youth and young adults is crucial to building a strong foundation for lasting impact. By developing a pipeline of next-generation leaders, especially in communities most affected by health inequities, we are creating a future where quality, affordable healthcare becomes the standard for all AANHPI families.

Congratulations on three decades of driving meaningful, community-centered policy solutions. I am excited to see your future efforts to improve health outcomes in underserved communities and am honored to stand with you as we work together to build a more equitable and healthier future for all.



With Aloha,

Jill N. Tokuda  
United States Representative  
Second District of Hawaii

MAZIE K. HIRONO  
HAWAII

**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1104

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY &  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS &  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

June 9, 2025

Aloha,

I extend my congratulations and join you all in celebrating APPEAL's 30th anniversary. From creating and distributing crucial educational resources, to facilitating leadership development initiatives and more, for the past three decades your organization has done critical work to advance health equity for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities across the country.

APPEAL understands the need for community-led advocacy, cross-cultural collaboration, and policy change at every level of government to improve health outcomes for underserved groups. Guided by a commitment to these principles, APPEAL has implemented comprehensive campaigns to promote health justice, train over a thousand community leaders throughout the AANHPI community, and develop the leadership skills of our youth leaders—the next generation of advocates and changemakers.

As we continue working to improve health outcomes and enhance health equity for and within AANHPI communities, I am grateful for APPEAL's tireless dedication and meaningful contributions. I look forward to collaborating further, as we build a more just and equitable future for our communities and generations to come. Mahalo and congratulations on all you have accomplished over the last 30 years.

Sincerely,



United States Senator

DORIS O. MATSUI  
7TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND  
COMMERCE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
COMMUNICATIONS AND  
TECHNOLOGY

**RANKING MEMBER**

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY

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May was Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month—so how fitting that we are also celebrating 30 years of the Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL)! For three decades, APPEAL has been at the forefront of advancing health equity and social justice for AANHPI communities through advocacy and critical public health initiatives. From tobacco control to obesity prevention programs, I'm proud to work with and support APPEAL in its mission. That is why I am leading the Public Health Funding Restoration Act, which restores the Prevention and Public Health Fund to its full amount and funds critical public health programs at CDC, SAMHSA, and ACL. APPEAL's work seeks to address health disparities but also builds the leadership infrastructure to sustain long-term change. By investing in our youth and young adults, APPEAL is nurturing the next generation of advocates who will continue to push for inclusive and effective policy solutions. During this time of political uncertainty and instability as well as this Administration's xenophobic and racist attacks against our community, APPEAL's mission to champion social justice and achieve equity for AANHPIs is more important than ever. Congratulations APPEAL, on 30 years of advocacy!

*Doris Matsui*

ED CASE  
1<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT, HAWAII

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1101



30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY SUMMIT  
Asian Pacific Partners for  
Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership  
June 2025

Aloha!

I am honored to join the members and supporters of APPEAL as you come together to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of your organization and celebrate and recommit yourselves to your mission to advance health equity among Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaii communities.

In your first thirty years, APPEAL has demonstrated your commitment to tobacco control, obesity prevention and leadership development. APPEAL also deserves accolades for your youth-focused capacity-building programs which have empowered the next generation of health leaders and advocates.

I extend my best wishes for many more years of success, and I look forward to working with you further to improve the health and well-being of the communities we serve.

With aloha,

**Ed Case**

Congressman Ed Case  
(Hawai'i-First District)

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 23, 2025

To the Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership,

I want to extend my heartfelt greetings and appreciation to the Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL) as you gather for the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Leadership Summit and reflect upon your distinguished service to our community. Your work on behalf of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders has touched the lives of so many.

APPEAL has played a unique and profound role in advancing health equity for AANHPI communities and in improving health outcomes for all underserved communities. I especially admire your commitment to investing in future generations through capacity building and helping young adults drive policy change.

As the son of immigrants, I know firsthand the pivotal role our community has played across all sectors of life in the United States. The contributions made are not only as entrepreneurs, business owners, and leaders, but also as advocates and public servants. I am honored to be the first Asian American Senator to serve the State of New Jersey, and the first Korean American Senator in the country. I know my story isn't an outlier -- it is a thread in the fabric of Asian Americans across this great nation, as I'm sure many in your organization can attest to.

I hope you accept my warmest wishes for a remarkable leadership summit and conference. You are all so important to the story of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders across the nation, and I wish you lasting success in achieving APPEAL's mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andy Kim", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andy Kim  
United States Senator



June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

Dear Friends,

It is my honor to welcome you to the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Leadership Summit, Conference, and Gala of the Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy, and Leadership (APPEAL)! This special occasion brings together community leaders, advocates, and other caring individuals dedicated to advancing health equity and social justice for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities.

Over the last thirty years, APPEAL has grown into a vital force for community-driven progress. Through its tireless efforts to strengthen local capacity, promote public health, and nurture emerging leaders, the organization has helped pave the way for transformative policy and lasting change. With deep roots in the Bay Area and an enduring national reach, APPEAL's legacy continues to shape a more equitable and inclusive future.

This gathering is a time to celebrate the extraordinary achievements of the past and to look ahead with renewed determination. Let us be inspired by the stories, experiences, and vision shared here, and continue building toward a healthier, more just society for all.

Congratulations to APPEAL on this incredible anniversary and best wishes for a meaningful and memorable week.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marilyn Strickland".

Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress



# PROGRAM



## 6:00 PM

SACRED OPENING- LOU MOERNER  
OLI – SHANI “KAI” CARVALHO

## VIDEO PRESENTATION

## REMARKS

*Rod Lew, Founder and Executive Director*

## RECOGNITION AWARDS

*Michael J. Wong Leadership Award*

*Caleb Otto Community Champion Award*

*Marjorie Kagawa-Singer Transformative Research Award*

## 30 CHAMPIONS CEREMONY

## CROSS GENERATIONAL TALK STORY CIRCLE

Moderator: Mia Ayer

Panelists: Arthur Chen, MD | Tana Lepule

Sarah Mesa-Haas | Uriah Blackwell

## ENTERTAINMENT

MUSICAL GUEST: REVERSE DNA



APPEAL

JUNE 23RD-27TH, 2025

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF APPEAL: MOVING TOWARD  
TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

HILTON SAN FRANCISCO FINANCIAL DISTRICT  
750 KEARNY ST., SAN FRANCISCO, CA, 94108, USA





**MC: NACKIE  
FISO-MOLI**

**NACKIE** is the co-founder of PasifikaByDesign (PBD) and a fierce advocate for Pacific Islander representation. As an on-air personality, speaker, emcee, and media director, she uses her platform to elevate Pacific Islander stories and strengthen community ties.

Through PBD's Pasifika In Focus program, PBD offers free photography and videography training to Pacific Islander youth, blending creative skills with mental health awareness and career development in an underrepresented industry.

A proud Samoan, mother of five, and cancer survivor, Nackie is also a vocal advocate for sexual assault survivors. Her mission is simple and powerful: empower Pacific Islanders, break barriers, and make sure their voices are heard—loud and proud.

**CARL** is the co-founder of the media based non-profit organization PasifikaByDesign (PBD). PBD focuses on uplifting and promoting Pacific Islanders that are captaining their life-journey in their pursuit of happiness and well-being. Carl is a proud father of triplets and husband of 27 years.



**MC: CARL L.  
JOHNSON**



**MODERATOR  
MIA AYER**

Mia Ayer is a Policy Manager at the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum. She brings local and federal policy experience on issues including health equity, civil rights, housing, and governmental affairs. She previously served as Caucus Assistant for the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), where she amplified community-driven priorities, liaised with more than 80 congressional offices and White House staff, and prepared the introduction and communications plan of the Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2024, the landmark health equity bill of the Congressional Tri-Caucus.

Mia was raised in the Piney Woods of rural Texas by her parents who moved from Japan and Canada to dedicate their careers to performing and teaching music. She holds a M.A. in social policy from The George Washington University and a B.A. with honors in anthropology and peace studies from the University of Notre Dame, where she played NCAA Division I golf.

## PANELISTS



Arthur Chen, MD



Tana Lepule



Sarah Mesa-Haas



Uriah Blackwell



**ENTERTAINMENT  
REVERSE DNA BAND**

Reverse DNA Band is a diverse collective of individuals with different musical styles, different experiences and skill levels on their instruments/voices/music. Their 'Day' jobs are in the construction-design-non-profit organizational and other related fields with a growing number of becoming retirees. Reverse DNA Band plays their music with an 'ear' towards benefiting organizations, causes and individuals that provide social and community betterment and positive energies in our communities. Music is what binds them and provides fulfillment in their lives.



## 30th Anniversary Award Honorees

### MICHAEL J. WONG LEADERSHIP AWARD:

#### JOON-HO YU

For the past nine years, Joon has served on APPEAL's Board of Directors and provided leadership as the Board Chair. Since the early 2000's, he has partnered with APPEAL through its leadership summits and on collaborative policy frameworks and a seminal research paper on community readiness. He exemplifies leadership qualities of humility, voluntary service, commitment to APPEAL's mission of health and social justice.

Joon serves as Deputy Director of the Korean Community Service Center of Greater Seattle where he works to strengthen organizational capacity to develop and implement programs and support community-based research on a range of topics including community safety, youth development, and parenting/caregiving community.

Joon is also a faculty member at the University of Washington School of Medicine in the Department of Pediatrics and the Department of Bioethics and Humanities, and an Investigator at the Treuman Katz Center for Pediatric Bioethics and Palliative Care at Seattle Children's. At the UW School of Public Health, Joon serves as an associate director of the Institute for Public Health Genetics and faculty in the Department of Epidemiology.

Joon's formative experiences include serving as program manager of chronic disease programs at the Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum and as a founding board member of the Praxis Project.



*The Michael J. Wong Leadership Award was inaugurated by APPEAL in 2020 in honor and memory of Michael "Mike" J. Wong, former APPEAL Board Member and social justice champion. Mike exemplified the ideals of transformative leadership with his dedication and commitment as a principled leader and activist with primary service to community (and often as a voluntary "servant"). As a virtuoso facilitator, Mike helped lead APPEAL board sessions and critical community gatherings through his strategic planning expertise, sound advice, challenging reality checks and encouragement. The Michael J. Wong Leadership Award is given to an individual (or organization) who exemplifies these critical leadership qualities.*

## CALEB OTTO COMMUNITY CHAMPION AWARD:

### COALITION FOR A TOBACCO-FREE PALAU

Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Palau (CTFP) has led tobacco control advocacy since its founding in 1994, later incorporating in 2010. Over the years, it has championed education, policy reform, and global collaboration to reduce tobacco-related harm.



CTFP's efforts have shaped legislation, including Palau's ratification of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2005, the enactment of comprehensive tobacco control laws in 2011, and tax measures that increased tobacco excise tax to 74% of retail prices by 2015. Its advocacy also influenced the formalization of a National Coordinating Mechanism for non-communicable disease prevention (EO 379, updated via EO 484) and the allocation of 10% of tobacco and alcohol tax revenue for non-communicable disease prevention programs. In 2023, CTFP successfully campaigned for the prohibition of e-cigarettes.

The organization has long engaged in culturally competent advocacy, deepening its work through partnerships with APPEAL and earning accolades such as the WHO World No Tobacco Day Award. It continues to drive research and awareness, publishing biennial tobacco industry interference reports, contributing to the Global Tobacco Industry Interference Index, and supporting efforts to regulate cigarette filter and e-cigarette waste in the UN Plastics Treaty negotiations.



*The Caleb Otto Community Champion Award was inaugurated by APPEAL in 2020 in honor and memory of Dr. Caleb T.O. Otto— a physician, community partner, social justice champion and former APPEAL Board Vice Chair. Caleb exemplified the ideals of transformative leadership with his dedication and commitment to communities particularly in the Pacific Islands and his courage in advocating against tobacco industry targeting. Caleb served as a member of the Senate of Palau and as the Permanent Representative of Palau to the United Nations. The Caleb Otto Community Champion Award is given to an individual (or organization) who exemplifies his critical leadership qualities for the Pacific Islander community.*



## INAUGURAL MARJORIE KAGAWA SINGER TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH AWARD:

Marjorie Kagawa-Singer, UCLA emerita professor of public health and Asian American Studies, was born in Lodi, California to George and Lily Kagawa, who, along with approximately 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent, were “relocated” to an internment camp, under FDR’s executive order 9066. It seems that as a child Margie didn’t think a lot about the injustices associated with our government incarcerating law-abiding Americans, but later the civil rights era of the 1960’s began to inform her thinking about social justice and inequalities, particularly among communities of color. At that point she decided her career would be devoted to addressing these issues, and how better to accomplish that than to become a health practitioner, in rendering individual care, and a public health practitioner, which involves entire communities.



Margie received her RN degree from San Francisco State College, and then moved to Los Angeles, where she worked at Los Angeles County/USC Medical Center on a hematology/oncology ward. It was during that experience that she had an epiphany, to wit: patients of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds have different responses to cancer therapy. “Why didn’t anyone study this before? I think I will,” she reasoned. So, that was the start of a remarkable, and ground-breaking career, employing novel qualitative research in cancer control and health disparities.

Margie received her PhD from the UCLA School of Public Health. Her seminal study of how Japanese (mostly Japanese American) patients with cancer navigate their treatment and relationships resulted in an oft-cited PhD thesis entitled “Bamboo and Oak.” Margie’s 50-year career has impacted thousands and thousands of individuals, from mentoring students at UCLA, to being a community advocate and employing data-driven community-based participatory research, to creating new tools for collecting data. One of the projects she is most proud of is as a co-PI on the NCI-funded Minority Training Grant, in which hundreds of public health graduate students of color went on to become leaders in cancer control, and in many cases as academic leaders.

## 30th Anniversary Award Honorees

Margie is the author of more than 200 peer review articles, book chapters, and monographs. She is one of the most cited authors in her field. Not surprisingly Margie has been the recipient of many awards, none of which she cares to acknowledge are due to her efforts. They include: The Christopher Jenkins Cancer Control Award; The AANCART Lifetime Achievement Award; UCLA School of Public Health Professor of the Year; APPEAL's Art Chen and Peggy Saika Mentor Spirit Award; and the prestigious Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

Finally, in addition to the vast numbers of individuals who have been positively impacted by Margie, none mean more to her than the elite members of the MKS Fan Club, namely her husband of 54 years (Peter emeritus professor of medicine at USC), son Jonathan, daughter Joana, and grandkids Jelani Jr, Keiko, Benjamin and Caleb.

*The Marjorie Kagawa-Singer Transformative Research Award was inaugurated by APPEAL in 2025 in honor of Margie's many contributions to diverse communities including: being a leader in community-based participatory research; teaching, mentoring and empowering students in a transformative way; being an advocate for data equity including data disaggregation; creating new tools for collecting data such as the community stages of readiness model; and combining elements of culture to better understand and serve diverse populations facing health disparities. The Marjorie Kagawa-Singer Transformative Research Award is given to an individual (or organization) who exemplifies Margie's transformative leadership qualities in the area of research and data.*





# Champions

*“These champions inspire all of us with their vision and tireless actions in providing leadership and creating change for our many communities. Thank you for your many foundational and endless contributions to APPEAL and our mission to uplift social justice, equity and empowerment for all of our communities.”*

*Sora Park Tanjasiri, DrPH, MPH  
Awards Chair  
APPEAL Board of Directors*

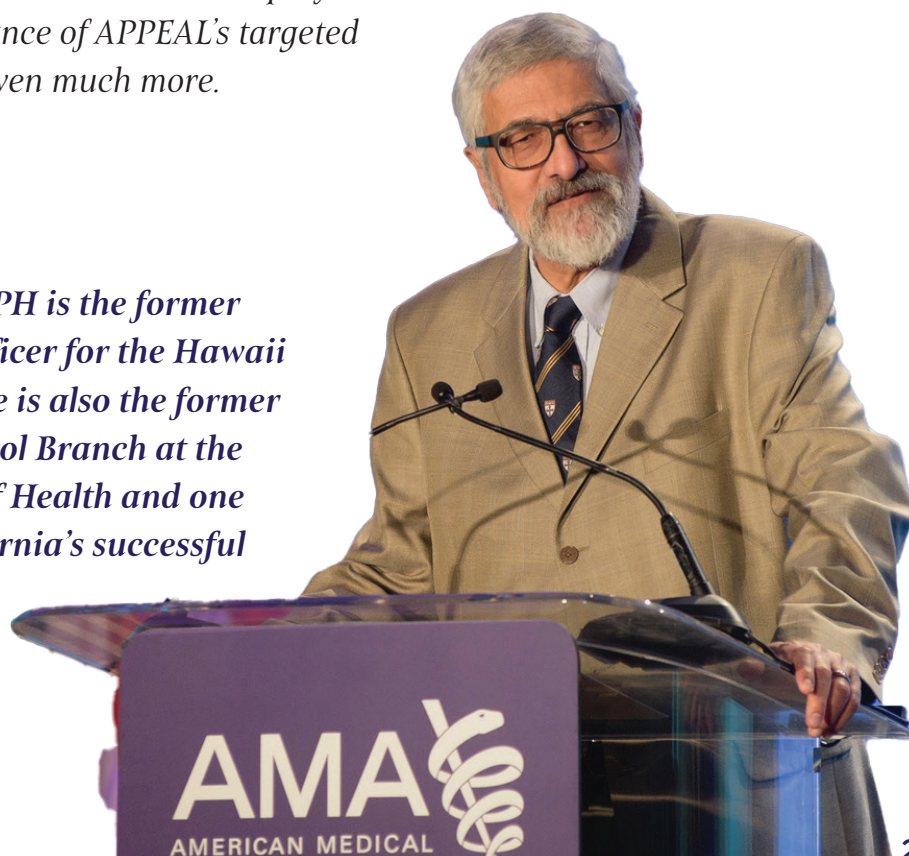


## DILEEP G. BAL, MD

*APPEAL represents a patient, persistent and indomitable presence that continues this AA and PI emphasis on a National, State and Local focus on these major root causes of death and disability. APPEAL has indeed influenced me somewhat professionally as we are both long time sister advocates for tobacco control and cancer prevention. But the members of APPEAL's Board, and most especially Rod, have influenced me greatly at the personal level.*

*APPEAL has demonstrably shaped public health, racial equity and especially the role of policy as a discrete major public health and social intervention strategy over several decades, for which I have lauded them in the past and will continue to laud them. Of course, in today's environment of systematically dismantling all federal tobacco control and equity programming, the importance of APPEAL's targeted emphasis is now needed even much more.*

***Dileep G. Bal, MD, MS, MPH is the former Kauai District Health Officer for the Hawaii Department of Health. He is also the former Chief of the Cancer Control Branch at the California Department of Health and one of the architects of California's successful statewide Tobacco Control Program.***



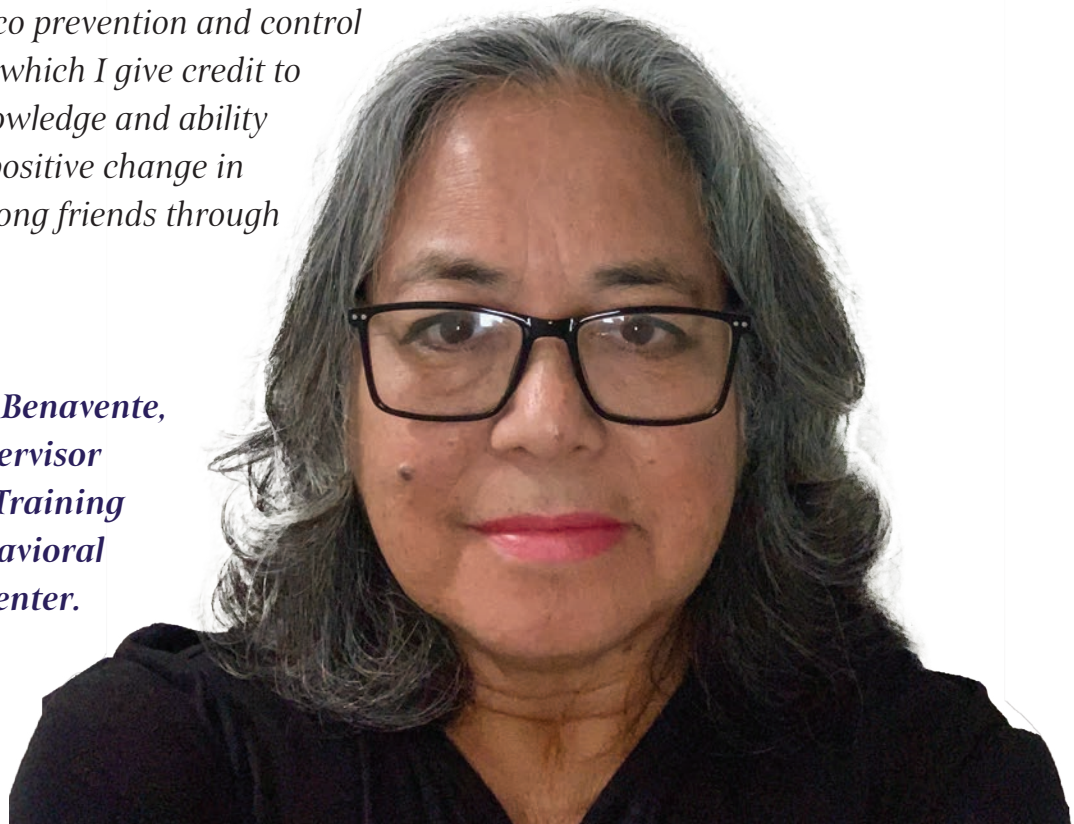


## BARBARA “BOBBIE” S.N. BENAVENTE

*APPEAL represents a commitment to empowerment, leadership and advocacy with and for diverse and underserved communities. APPEAL instills recognition and respect for the work and readiness in social justice change among various Asian and Pacific Island communities that effectively brings key youth and adult leaders together as partners. APPEAL has influenced young leaders in assessing their personal and professional capacity and readiness for change and provided important direction and mentorship.*

*Through my involvement with APPEAL as a board member and a leadership training participant, I met and learned from many nationally known leaders in tobacco prevention and control and social justice; all of which I give credit to helping broaden my knowledge and ability to effect and influence positive change in Guam. I have made lifelong friends through APPEAL.*

***Barbara “Bobbie” S.N. Benavente, MPA is the former Supervisor of the Prevention and Training Branch at Guam’s Behavioral Health and Wellness Center.***





# Champions

## KIM KU'ULEI BIRNIE

*To me, APPEAL means longevity with its strong continuity of mission. It's an organization founded on passion for prevention, data-driven action, cultural wisdom and lived experiences.*

*My strongest memories of APPEAL have been the incorporation of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander issues, the recognition of Pacific Islanders as a distinct racial group; and all the leadership trainings in different locations with cultural and historical significance like the Wai'anae Coast community and Angel Island.*

*APPEAL provided a foundation for community organizations and communities to engage around important issues like commercial tobacco control, which then evolved into the capacity to respond to other health and social justice issues with the same passion, commitment, skills and, eventually, impact.*

***Kim Ku'ulei Birnie is currently the Director of Communications and Community Engagement at Papa Ola Lōkahi.***



## JEFFREY B. CABALLERO

### *Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)*

*A leadership style focused on inspiring and motivating others to achieve a shared vision through growth and development was an early lesson I learned through APPEAL. The younger me was not only influenced by APPEAL's leadership model but the community stages of readiness model also influenced my overall approach to capacity building. However, APPEAL was and is more than just a set of lessons and practices; the network of colleagues and friends over the decades have meant so much more both professionally and personally.*

***Jeffrey B. Caballero, MPH  
is currently the Executive  
Director of the Association  
of Asian Pacific Community  
Health Organizations  
(AAPCHO).***



# Champions

## ARTHUR CHEN, MD

*Asian Health Services*

*Arthur Chen, MD is currently the Senior Fellow of Family Medicine at Asian Health Services.*

*APPEAL demonstrates a commitment towards building strong, courageous and strategic AA and NH/PI leaders and change agents to fight back against the negative impact of the tobacco industry in our communities. APPEAL developed and advanced a public policy change model and framework that engages and empowers our communities in effectively taking on the tobacco industry. APPEAL as a national organization emphasizes solidarity among our very diverse AA and NH/PI populations while promoting community health leadership development, engagement and activation to advance health equity in ALL of our AA and NH/PI communities.*



# MAY JUAN CHEN

*APPEAL was the first national AA and PI organization ASIA was introduced to during its beginnings as a new and only social service organization in NE Ohio. APPEAL has remained ever since as an enduring, meaningful, committed partner and advocate to support the growth of ASIA to where it is today. The leadership training provided for our AA and PI youths to address tobacco training created opportunities, developed life and advocacy skills for them that often in the Midwest they are unable to experience. And they instilled confidence, a stronger sense of AA and PI identity and found meaning and purpose in the youths' lives.*

*APPEAL has demonstrated itself as a true and authentic champion for AA and PI health through its continuous advocacy and training efforts to reach out to regions and populations underserved and invisible to mainstream public health organizations and systems. APPEAL can take great pride for ASIA's success in promoting health equity in NE Ohio.*

***May Chen is the Emeritus Executive Director and Co-Founder at Asian Services In Action (ASIA), Inc. and Co-Founder and Board President of Jin Huo Community, Inc.***





# Champions

## MOON S. CHEN, JR., PhD

*APPEAL=Invitation to all Asian American and Pacific Islander populations to better Health. After all these years: stronger APPEAL known for earning the trust and preparing generations to engage in tobacco use prevention, cessation, for health.*

*My conviction on the centrality of mitigating the tobacco burden through prevention of its use and promotion of its cessation of use is unwavering. I have believed that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are “not hard-to-reach” but “hard-ly reached.” APPEAL’s work over the past 30 years has reduced that gap so that fewer and fewer AAs and PIs are hard-ly reached. For that we are all grateful.*

***Moon S. Chen, Jr. is a Professor at University of California, Davis.***



# Champions

## CONGRESSMEMBER JUDY CHU

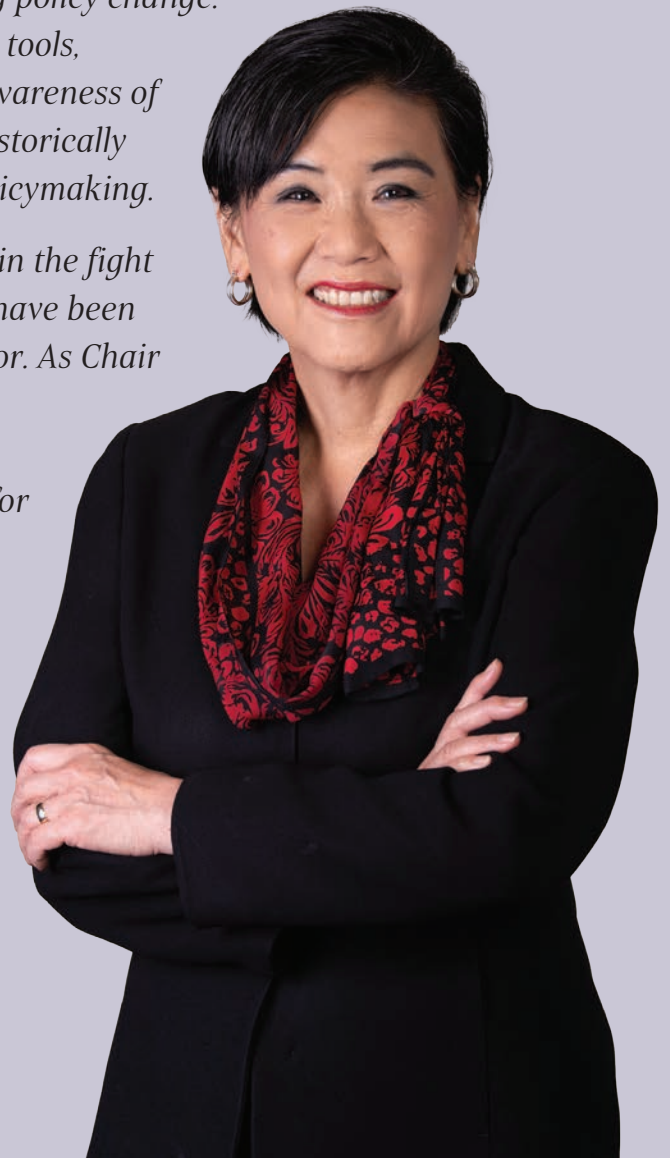
### *Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC)*

*For over 30 years, Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL) has advanced health equity through commercial tobacco control and community empowerment. Rooted in its mission to support Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities, APPEAL has built a powerful legacy of strengthening grassroots leadership and promoting policy change.*

*In equipping community-based organizations with tools, training, and research, APPEAL has helped raise awareness of tobacco-related health disparities, ensuring that historically marginalized communities are central voices in policymaking.*

*APPEAL's leadership has been especially impactful in the fight against menthol flavored tobacco products, which have been disproportionately marketed to communities of color. As Chair Emerita of the Congressional Asian Pacific Caucus (CAPAC), I was proud to work with APPEAL and a coalition of community organizations to advocate for the Food and Drug Administration to ban menthol flavored cigarettes. I am grateful to be honored tonight as an APPEAL Champion and am excited to continue to partner with this organization to reshape public health narratives and support the health of the AANHPI community.*

***U.S. Congresswoman Judy Chu was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in July 2009. She represents the 28th Congressional District.***



## PETER J. CRUZ

*Having over 20 years of experience in the field of Education and Prevention in the field of Nicotine Addiction, APPEAL has been one of the two national organizations that have been with us, throughout this entire journey. The majority of the laws concerning the use of nicotine products on Guam, APPEAL has always been supportive through letters of support, and culturally, issues that pertain to Pacific Islanders. I would like to say thank you to Dr. Mamie Balajada, Barbara Benavente, Dr. Annette David, and Luis Martinez from Guam for your support. Most importantly, I want to say Dangkulu na Si Yuus Masse to Mr. Rod Lew for allowing me to become part of an organization that's making an impact on Pacific Islanders lives.*

***Peter J. Cruz is currently  
a Nicotine Cessation  
Facilitator on Guam.***



## DUONG-CHI DO

*When I think back to my time with APPEAL, I feel so grateful for the opportunity to have been part of an organization whose work is rooted in trust, humility, and connection. It was incredible to witness how transformative the leadership summits were for Fellows each year, and one of the great privileges of my career to work alongside the incredibly dedicated and talented staff and facilitators who brought the program to life year after year. To me, APPEAL represents a culture of sharing in learning and making mistakes, of celebrating the multitudes of gifts that each of us have to offer the world, of manifesting a world that is a more just and equitable place, together.*

***Duong-Chi Do is the former  
Program Coordinator for APPEAL.***





# Champions

## LAUFOU JACOB FITISEMANU, JR.

*When we saw the need to enhance our local coalition-building and leadership development efforts, we reached out to APPEAL and they facilitated dynamic, impactful training sessions that were critical to the success of our first Utah Pacific Islander Leadership Summit. Since my first interaction with APPEAL over a decade ago, I have always found the organization and its staff to be grounded in integrity and sincerity, always exemplary of servant leadership and generosity.*

*My association with APPEAL over the years has increased my personal capacity to implement servant leadership and strategic approaches to addressing health justice issues. APPEAL has also expanded my professional network to include health advocacy colleagues and collaborators, many of whom have become close friends. APPEAL has created spaces for convening NH/PI equity advocates in dialogue venues that aren't otherwise inclusive of NH/PI voices, especially in relation to commercial tobacco prevention and control.*

***Laufou Jacob Fitisemanu Jr is the State Representative for District 30 in the Utah House of Representatives.***



## KEVIN KAHAKULA'AKEA JOHN FONG

*APPEAL conjures up memories of a young Rod Lew, who was my colleague at Asian Health Services in the 90's. It was there that I witnessed his passion, mixed with his knowledge and organizing skills to mount effective campaigns and programs to confront the traditions, patterns and habits that contributed to chronic diseases in our communities. His dreams of taking this local experience and applying it nationally led to the formation of APPEAL. Those early years with the young people in the APPEAL Leadership Program were so much fun! We worked hard, laughed a lot, slept little and impacted so many lives in a positive way.*

*Now APPEAL is responsible for cultivating a generation of social justice leaders throughout the world. It was through Rod's belief in and support of me in my early years as a consultant that really established a foundation for my practice, which continues to thrive after 30 years. I came to realize that my unique contribution in the world of leadership development and organizational design is anchored in Asian American and Native Hawaiian cultural values and traditions.*

***Kevin Kahakula'akea  
John Fong is the Founder  
of the Kahakulei  
Institute.***



## MARY ANNE FOO

*APPEAL has always been a leader in not just tobacco control, but in the forefront of public health leadership development, capacity building, and changing systems and policies. APPEAL was one of the first organizations that truly reached out to underserved AA and NH/PIs nationally and on the islands. I love that the most underserved populations were focused on and supported. APPEAL has truly made a difference with all.*

*APPEAL influenced my journey by helping me to see the impact that policy and systems change could have on the health of communities and to develop an ethical and equitable process of support. APPEAL has worked to develop leaders to transform the environment, policies, and systems to support marginalized communities to address racial equity in public health. In addition, APPEAL has been a model for collaboration. Rod has really modeled this for everyone!*

**Mary Anne Foo, MPH is currently the Executive Director of the Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA).**





## LISA FU

*When I hear the name APPEAL, I think of the words Leadership and Community. I have fond memories of organizing leadership trainings and conferences and meeting incredible passionate NH/PI and AA community members from across the US and the Pacific Islands. Working at APPEAL as one of my first jobs after college set a powerful foundation and example for me and how I approach community work.*

*APPEAL taught me what racial solidarity and inclusivity looks like in real practice. From authentic participation of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities to intentional inclusivity and solidarity with Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and queer communities to multi-ethnic pan-Asian representation - APPEAL taught me that this work is not only possible but deeply necessary to create social change.*

*Lisa Fu, MPH is currently the Executive Director of the CA Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative. She is also the former Program Coordinator at APPEAL.*



# Champions

## LAURA HAMASAKA

***Laura Hamasaka is currently  
the Senior Strategist of  
Commercial Tobacco Control  
and Health Promotion at the  
National Network of Public  
Health Institutes***

*I see APPEAL as a health justice organization that has relentlessly advocated to ensure Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and Asian Americans are part of critical conversations and visible in commercial tobacco and cancer prevention and control. This is not easy given very limited disaggregated data. Many people dismiss the reality that commercial tobacco and cancer are serious public health issues for all our communities. APPEAL works to increase our collective presence at the local, state, and national level so we are making decisions about our communities and our future.*

*For me, APPEAL has been a consistent and supportive organization for over 20 years. I appreciate Rod as a co-conspirator in the commercial tobacco and cancer work. To advance health equity and justice you need trusted partners and friends. I am grateful to APPEAL for being that for me. One of the things I appreciate about APPEAL is the way they collaborate with communities of color, indigenous communities, and LGBTQ+ communities together to advance a collective equity agenda.*





# KAYING HANG

*I'll never forget my first APPEAL leadership meeting in Oahu back in the late '90s. It was the first time I truly saw the depth and breadth of our community's power. Rod Lew's vision and intentionality in bringing people together to build a healthier AA and NH/PI community left a lasting impression. Since then, I've watched APPEAL grow into a powerful movement that goes far beyond tobacco—it's about health, justice, and community.*

*APPEAL has been such a big part of my growth—as a person, as a professional, and as an advocate. It helped me understand how local voices and leadership can shape policy and drive real change. It also reminded me how important it is that our communities are seen, heard, and represented in public health. I carry those lessons with me every day.*

*APPEAL has been a trailblazer in showing how deeply tobacco and chronic disease affect our communities—and why culturally grounded approaches matter. It's brought visibility, voice, and real advocacy power to AA and NH/PI communities in ways that have shaped public health and equity conversations nationwide.*

***Kaying Hang, MPH is currently the Senior Vice President of Programs and Partnerships at the Sierra Health Foundation and the President of The Center at Sierra Health Foundation.***



## BETTY LEE HAWKS

*Even before APPEAL's founding in 1994, my work in HHS had made me aware of Rod's development and creation of a new organization to fill a gap in public health for AA and PI communities. I've always felt a connection to APPEAL– the first and only national AA and PI organization focused on the public health threat from commercial tobacco to our communities.*

*I share a story familiar to many Chinese Americans in my generation-- my father, who immigrated as a teen from China in 1925, was a lifelong smoker until he quit in 1970. He showed me how prevalent smoking was among males from China and other Asian countries due to the grip of nicotine addiction and marketing. Science, data disaggregation, data equity and real-life applications based on evidence have always been part of APPEAL's fabric which resonated with me from the beginning and means even more in today's climate.*

*APPEAL has been a convener for the multicultural tobacco control coalition for many years, forging relationships with other marginalized communities including Black, Indigenous, Latino/Hispanic, LGBTQI, to oppose harmful, unjust, and inequitable policies. APPEAL stood for what can be better accomplished together with other affected communities, rather than going on its own.*

***Betty Lee Hawks is formerly the Senior Advisor and Special Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Health, the Office of Minority Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She is also a past Chair of the APPEAL Board of Directors.***



## ELAINE ISHIHARA

*Elaine Ishihara is currently the Executive Director at the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition Advocating Together (APICAT) for Health. She is also the Founding Chair of the APPEAL Board of Directors.*

*APPEAL changed my life- both personally and professionally. I had to quit smoking before being accepted to the First APPEAL Leadership Summit in 1997 and I've been smoke-free since. APPEAL has also fed my soul professionally as it relates to community building. The models that APPEAL developed still resonate after 30 years. We replicated the APPEAL Leadership Model for communities of color and LGBTQ+ persons in Washington State. There was a time when, if any AA or NH/PI was involved in commercial tobacco control, there would be a connection somehow back to APPEAL. That is what legacy is all about.*

*APPEAL is more than just a name. APPEAL is more meaningful as it is centered in community, inclusion, intergenerational collaboration, trusted relationships, movement building- all that leads to impacting change and advancing justice.*

*APPEAL has been intentional in creating a safe space that values and celebrates culture and has fun together. Like Family. Memorable!*



## HOWARD KOH, MD

*When I think of APPEAL, I remain humbled and awed by the pioneering leadership, commitment and perseverance of Rod Lew and his great colleagues. They have stood up for AA and NH/PI health in a historic way that continues to inspire us all.*



*Howard Koh, MD is the Harvey V. Fineberg Professor of the Practice of Public Health Leadership and the Inaugural Chair of the Initiative on Health and Homelessness at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. He is also the Former Assistant Secretary for Health for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*

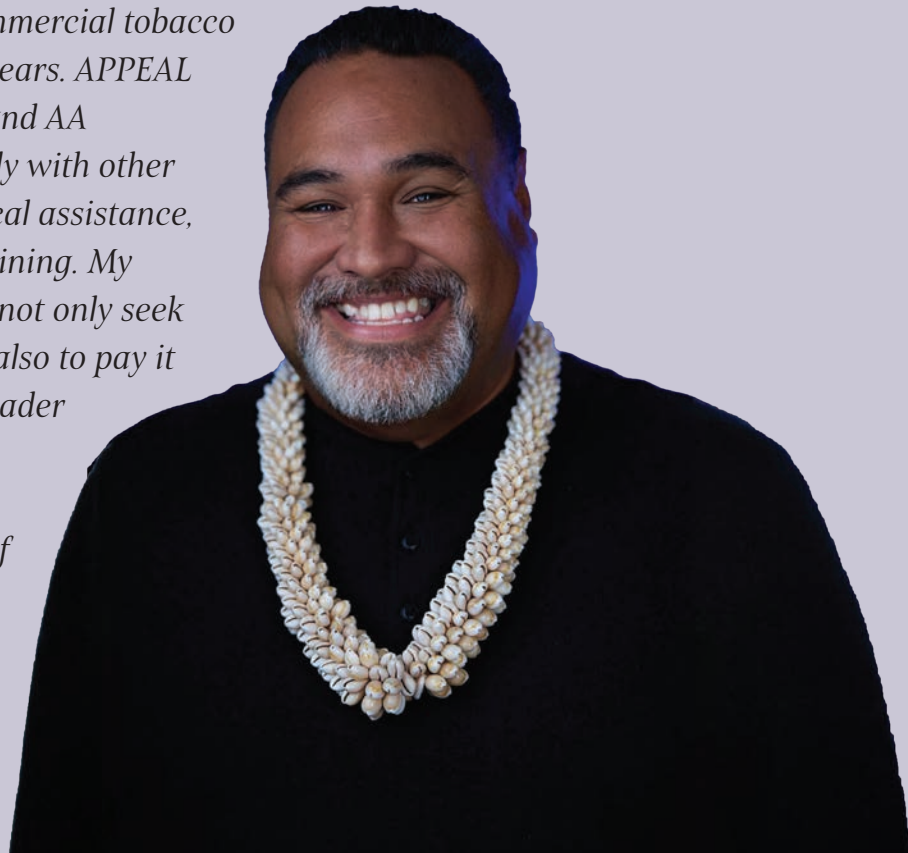


## JONATHAN “TANA” LEPULE

*The memories I have with APPEAL is the coming together of folks to address and uplift the wellness of our NH/PI and AA communities. APPEAL came into my life at a perfect time. APPEAL helped me to step into the leadership role that was already in me. My servant leadership was built on the many interactions with not only the community but across other ethnic communities. I was able to understand that autonomy and unity can co-exist. I was able to transfer my strategizing around commercial tobacco to other areas like cancer and equity.*

*APPEAL has been a pillar in the commercial tobacco control and equity space for many years. APPEAL humbly serves not only our NH/PI and AA communities but also cross culturally with other ethnic communities through technical assistance, advocacy, policy, and leadership training. My journey with APPEAL has led me to not only seek and build my leadership ability but also to pay it forward by being a better servant leader to others like our elders, youth and allies. I am truly grateful to APPEAL for understanding the importance of policy and research.*

***Jonathan “Tana” Lepule is currently the Director of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Affairs at APPEAL.***





# Champions

## LILLIAN LEW

*I cannot begin to tell you how much I enjoyed working with APPEAL. I not only learned a lot but also am delighted with all the work we accomplished together. I am so happy that APPEAL is 30 years strong! This next generation needs you. Congratulations on your 30th anniversary!*



***Lillian Lew is formerly the Director of Families  
in Good Health at St. Mary Medical Center (now  
Dignity Health) in Long Beach***

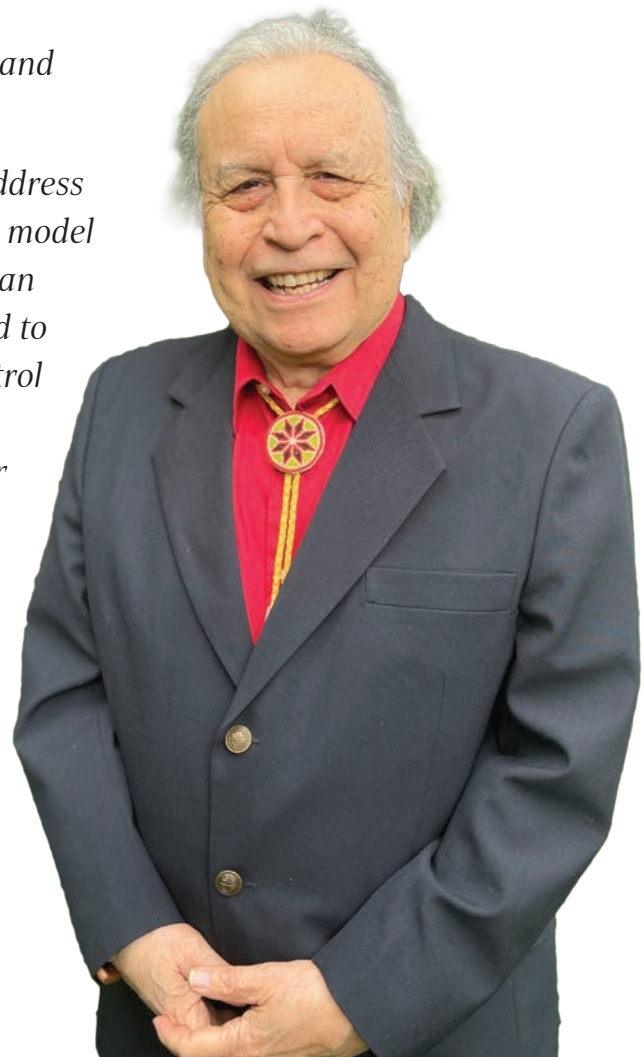
## JAIME MARTINEZ

*Twenty years ago, APPEAL partnered with ClearWay Minnesota to create the Leadership And Advocacy Institute to Advance Minnesota's Parity for Priority Populations (LAAMPP Institute), an innovative, cross-cultural leadership institute that sought to eliminate commercial tobacco and other health-related disparities among African/African-American, American Indian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Chicano/Latino, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) communities.*

*That experience changed my perspective on how to address commercial tobacco in priority populations. APPEAL's model was a transformative leadership model that provided an opportunity for LAAMPP Fellows to build capacity and to recognize their power in the commercial tobacco control field (and public health in general). LAAMPP Fellows continue to express that this experience changed their professional trajectories.*

*APPEAL has been the leader in building capacity and leadership to shape public health, racial equity and responsive policy in commercial tobacco for priority populations. The state of Minnesota benefited tremendously from APPEAL's efforts in building leadership and capacity among priority populations.*

***Jaime Martinez, MEd is formerly the Director of Community Development at ClearWay Minnesota.***



# Champions

## CAROL MCGRUDER

*APPEAL has helped me to be more “thoughtful and deliberate” in my work. APPEAL has helped me to be mindful and enjoy the beautiful diversity in our communities and at the same time our universality. APPEAL’s continuing fight for data “disaggregation” and the false classifications of NH/PI and Asian American communities have been very impactful. When I hear the name APPEAL, I think of inclusiveness and making space for all of us. I have enjoyed our “decades” of collaboration and leadership.*

***Carol McGruder is the Co-Founder and Co-Chair of the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council.***



## SARAH MESA-HAAS

*Auntie Lola Sablan-Santos at Guam Communications Network introduced me to APPEAL and the fellowship program. Being a young APPEAL fellow, I gained invaluable knowledge on how to lead and implement tobacco control efforts in my community. I gained a real sense of pride in my Pacific Islander heritage as I participated in Talk Story with Kevin Fong.*

*I believe APPEAL influenced how the younger generation participates in public health, racial equity and policy change. I believed I could make an impact in racial equity in public health. We became a voice for Pacific Islander youth. I was uplifted and empowered to combat society's marginalization of Pacific Islanders.*

*APPEAL ignited a spark in me to show more Pacific Islander representation in the fight against health disparities in Southern California. After receiving a prenatal Down Syndrome diagnosis, I found a lack of representation of Pacific Islanders in the Down Syndrome community. I have made it my mission to ensure Asian and Pacific Islander families are represented. This is a value I gained from APPEAL.*

***Sarah Mesa-Haas is currently a Speech Language Pathology Assistant. She also is a Home Supportive Services provider for her child with Down Syndrome.***





## CONCHITA MONTAÑO

*APPEAL is a national leader that influences, guides, and provides opportunities for individuals representing and/or working with Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and Asian American communities to work together and accomplish shared goals. APPEAL provides a unifying framework that aligns people representing and/or working with the Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Asian American communities to collaborate and to empower themselves in achieving common goals for creating community-wide change in relationship to tobacco control.*

***Conchita Montaña is currently and Educator/Evaluator for Montaña Education and Evaluation. She has been a Trainer/Facilitator for the Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL) for 16 years.***







***Eric Y. Mose is currently the Health Services Manager of Ambulatory & Allied Care Services at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, WA.***

## ERIC Y. MOSE

*APPEAL changed the trajectory of my life and provided me with the tools to think outside the box in working toward healthier communities, especially those most marginalized. Even though I no longer work in tobacco, I use those skills I gained on a daily basis in my work now with HIV and other infectious diseases.*

*I feel APPEAL really took the lead in bringing our communities together to work toward health justice when the powers that be and corporations relied on our communities staying in their silos to keep us sick and tobacco dependent. APPEAL had the foresight to focus on tobacco to create a model of leadership that could then be applied to any health justice issue. APPEAL reclaims the narrative about what makes a community 'healthy' and empowers change through the forging of connections.*

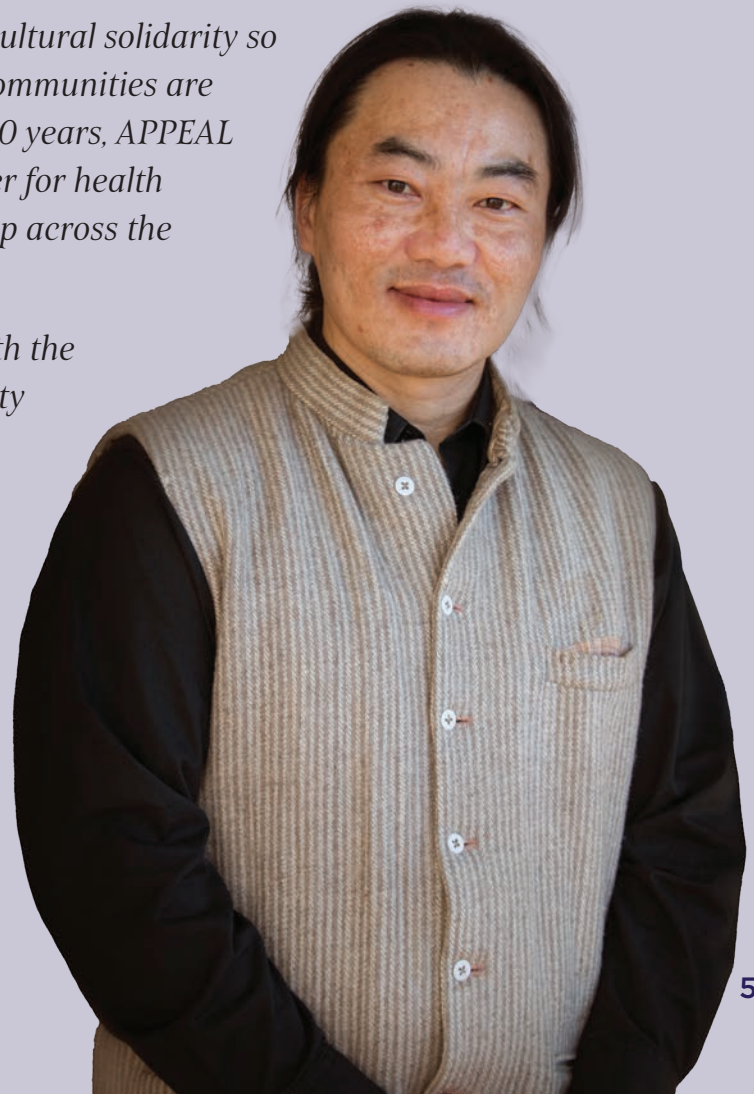
## VAYONG MOUA

*More than anything, APPEAL, conjures for me...a deep sense of shared struggle and shared prosperity among our communities. APPEAL exemplifies a way of leading by transforming ourselves, organizations, and the structures around us to center health and justice. I call it the “Tao of APPEAL”, a way of being both the roots and wings of cultural transformation in cross cultural, intergenerational, and multisector spaces.*

*APPEAL is the actualization of cross-cultural solidarity so that public health and marginalized communities are meaningfully braided together. After 30 years, APPEAL has culminated into a movement leader for health justice, advocacy praxis, and leadership across the structural determinants of health.*

*For me, APPEAL has made public health the “public’s health,” embedded racial equity in policy making and governance, and been vigilant in lifting up our voices in ways that build power with other communities experiencing inequities. Because of APPEAL, I can go into places that systematically reject my people and advocate with unshakable truths and ancestral energy.*

***Vayong Moua is currently the Director of Community Health Advocacy at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.***





## ARNAB MUKHERJEA, DrPH

*To me, APPEAL signifies embracing community in of all its forms, especially those who have been traditionally underrepresented under the AA and NH/PI racial/ethnic categories. In my numerous associations with APPEAL, I have observed and felt a true embodiment of solidarity within diversity, and a common purpose to uplifting all communities through representation and advocacy.*

*My engagement with APPEAL, starting as a Leadership Fellow in the early 2000s, has always provided an environment where my lived experience and community interactions were not only acknowledged but welcomed. Most notably, my research and intervention work surrounding use of culturally-specific tobacco by South Asian communities was elevated, not only in APPEAL's policy and advocacy platform, but through APPEAL-commissioned peer-reviewed publications.*

*APPEAL's nuanced policy platform, which balances community autonomy with changing social and cultural norms, while countering adverse corporate interests, has been a seminal foundation for protecting and promoting the health of priority populations.*

***Arnab Mukherjea, DrPH, MPH is currently an Associate Professor of Public Health at the California State University (CSU), East Bay and the Director of the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Middle Leadership Academy.***





## DAVID NAKASHIMA

*I am a changed person due to my journey with APPEAL. As a trainer/facilitator, I am humbled by my 30 years of travel with APPEAL – I have learned through the generosity of community leaders and diverse communities across the country (and world). These lessons in humility have made me a more effective practitioner in my public health work. As a national tobacco control advocate, I carry and share these lessons with leaders, organizations, communities & systems everywhere I travel across the country.*

*On a personal level, I am grateful for the life-long friendships I have developed over the past three decades. I treasure my diverse & extended APPEAL family – my Samoan bro, NH Aunties, JA sisters, Pacific Northwest relatives, Minnesota primo/cousin and many, many others. I know there has been an impact on systemic change when I meet people from across the Pacific and continent who speak of the APPEAL leadership model and apply the learning in data disaggregation, organizational collaboration, advocacy efforts towards policy change in their communities.*

***David Nakashima, MS is currently  
Principal at Nakashima & Associates.  
He is also the former Program Manager  
at the Asian & Pacific Islander Tobacco  
Education Network at the APIAHF.***





## JEANNETTE NOLTENIUS, PhD

*The APPEAL leadership training program is innovative, challenging, and creates an environment for developing trust, respect, and leadership. APPEAL's leadership model was adapted for the Latino community through the National LCAT (Latino Alcohol and Tobacco Control) HANDS Program.*

*APPEAL played a vital role for over 30 years in tobacco and health equity, and was the leader among equals at the Tobacco Control Network assuring that no racial or LGBTQ+ group would be left behind. Thanks to APPEAL, the states of CA, MN and WA among others, created an inclusive, equitable plan to address the needs of their diverse communities. Before APPEAL, marginalized communities were pitted against each other for the few resources that were not going to change the system.*

*Personally, Rod Lew and his training group taught me that without community engagement, national policies are not effective. We must get the buy-in of the community for changes to be lasting and impactful. Because of APPEAL and its commitment to health equity, I was able to feel supported in the tobacco control field where marginalized communities had to fight for a place at the table. APPEAL also showed me that it was more important to build a field than to make small gains individually.*

***Jeannette Noltenius, PhD is the Former Executive Director of the National Latino Tobacco Control Network.***





## PAULA HEALANI PALMER, PhD

*APPEAL has been a long-time force in supporting tobacco control and policy efforts. I had the pleasure of working on APPEAL's Com-PEAT project that focused on understanding the pathways to successful tobacco policy change for Cambodian and Pacific Islander communities in Southern California. I have been able to incorporate lessons learned from my work with APPEAL in my own research and mentoring of students.*

*While APPEAL has had broad effects on the tobacco control and policy landscape, I have personally seen how APPEAL's training programs have provided opportunities for and shaped the careers of the next generation of tobacco control advocates and policy change makers. Many of these trainees eventually become the "trainers" in their own communities*

***Paula Healani Palmer, PhD is currently a Professor at Claremont Graduate University, School of Community & Global Health.***



## LOLA SABLAN-SANTOS

***Lola Sablan-Santos  
is the Founder and  
Former CEO at Guam  
Communications  
Network.***

*My life's passion has been to work with other NH/PIs and Asian Americans in San Diego County, Los Angeles County, Arizona particularly in tobacco control. My Dad's cancer had a great impact on my working on tobacco control advocacy. As an apartment manager, I was the first to introduce smoke-free housing in San Diego with 3 apartments complexes.*

*I remember many things about my APPEAL days including the friendships, the mentorships, the leadership summits in Hawaii, and having powerful activists speak at APPEAL events like Dolores Huerta. On my APPEAL journey, I was honored to work with other Chamorros like Sarah Mesa, Liza Laguana-Merrill and Lou Quitugua. I was also able to have Tana Lepule, Mary Anne Foo, and Sora Tanjasiri as mentors!!!*



## ALISON SHIGAKI, MD

*I appreciate the non-traditional but culturally relevant leadership training I received from APPEAL, which has been a highpoint in my career and personal life. Being a fellow sparked my passion for tobacco prevention and cessation in the AA and NH/PI communities. It created many opportunities I would not have had otherwise. It also provided a network of mentors, friends and colleagues who I communicate with to this day. I feel very fortunate to be part of the APPEAL family.*

*After participating in the APPEAL leadership program, I was able to work on tobacco control at International Community Health Center (ICHS) and with APICAT. I am very proud of the in-language tobacco cessation program for Chinese and Vietnamese men that we developed at ICHS. As a family physician I continue providing tobacco prevention education and cessation to my youth and adult patients on a regular basis.*



***Alison Shigaki, MD, MPH, DipABLM is currently a Family Physician at Kaiser Permanente in Seattle, WA.***

## DONG SUH

### *Asian Health Services*

*Personally, I quit smoking as I started anti-tobacco work at APIAHF and joined APPEAL. Both personally and professionally, it was great to meet so many leaders of color working on community health issues and see and appreciate commonality and differences with a goal of improving community health for all. We were a scrappy group of community health advocates and researchers focused on long term improvement of AA and NH/PI health through culturally tailored outreach, leadership development and advocacy. Through APPEAL, it's great to have met so many nascent leaders who are now leading their community and growing the next generation of leaders and advocates.*

***Dong Suh, MPP is currently the Chief Deputy of Administration, Analytics at Asian Health Services.***



## FAHINA TAVAKE-PASI

***Otolose Fahina Tavake-Pasi is currently the Executive Director of the National Tongan American Society (NTAS).***

*Personally, due to APPEAL, I have become a better leader in directing the efforts of National Tongan-American Society (NTAS) to better serve NHPI communities of Utah. Professionally, I have great respect and gratitude for the wonderful programs that APPEAL has implemented as it has had great impact on our NHPI's health here in Utah.*

*APPEAL has helped to mobilize our NHPI community to get involved in pushing for policy changes that promote healthier lifestyle among NHPIs and other ethnic communities. For example, NHPI community members were involved in pushing HB 403, a bill that pushed for restriction of SNAP from serving unhealthy food items, like soda.*

*I believe that APPEAL is a perfect example of Transformative Leadership. APPEAL's vision of a healthier community is included and effectively promoted in all of their trainings and programs. As such, NTAS staff took on APPEAL's vision by promoting and empowering the NHPI community to take ownership of their health.*





## ELISA TONG, MD

*When I hear the name APPEAL, the words “power in community” comes to mind. I remember attending my first APPEAL training when I was a student. Through APPEAL, it has been such a great experience meeting so many people of different backgrounds and places who are all passionate for the health and well-being for their community. APPEAL has been a key influence in my journey working in tobacco and cancer. When I was a student, I started studying how the tobacco industry’s influence impacted health and being an APPEAL fellow helped me start thinking about how to put knowledge into action.*

*Personally, I feel that APPEAL has provided me with an ever-growing community network of support and learning. Professionally, APPEAL has helped me think more broadly beyond describing disparities and engage in strategies to address health equity. One of the special supplement papers that I was fortunate to collaborate on described APPEAL’s 4-Prong Policy Change Model, which helps me even now organize my own thinking about policy change at four different levels (community, mainstream institution, legislative and corporate).*

***Elisa K. Tong, MD is currently a Professor in the Department of Internal Medicine and Director of the Tobacco Cessation Policy Research Center at University of California, Davis.***



## VALERIE R. WHIPPS

*WORDS: Dr. Otto comes top of mind when I hear APPEAL. He was key to Palau's ratification of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and the inclusion of FCTC implementation in the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 3A). APPEAL also brings to mind perseverance, courage, advocacy, cultural competency, healthy environments and empowerment through community leadership training and capacity building.*

*MEMORIES: Specific memories are of working with Rod Lew over many years and his sincerity, boundless energy and keen support. He facilitated our workshop for development of the Strategic Plan (2010-2015) and provided support for the HEAL program when we worked with the sporting community in Palau to promote healthy lifestyles.*

*APPEAL instilled my confidence in leading tobacco control work in our communities in Palau. It also significantly shaped my perspective for culturally competent advocacy that is essential in empowering our communities for systemic change for health, particularly in creating environments and promoting lifestyles conducive to being tobacco-free.*

**Valerie R. Whipps is currently the Chairperson of the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Palau.**

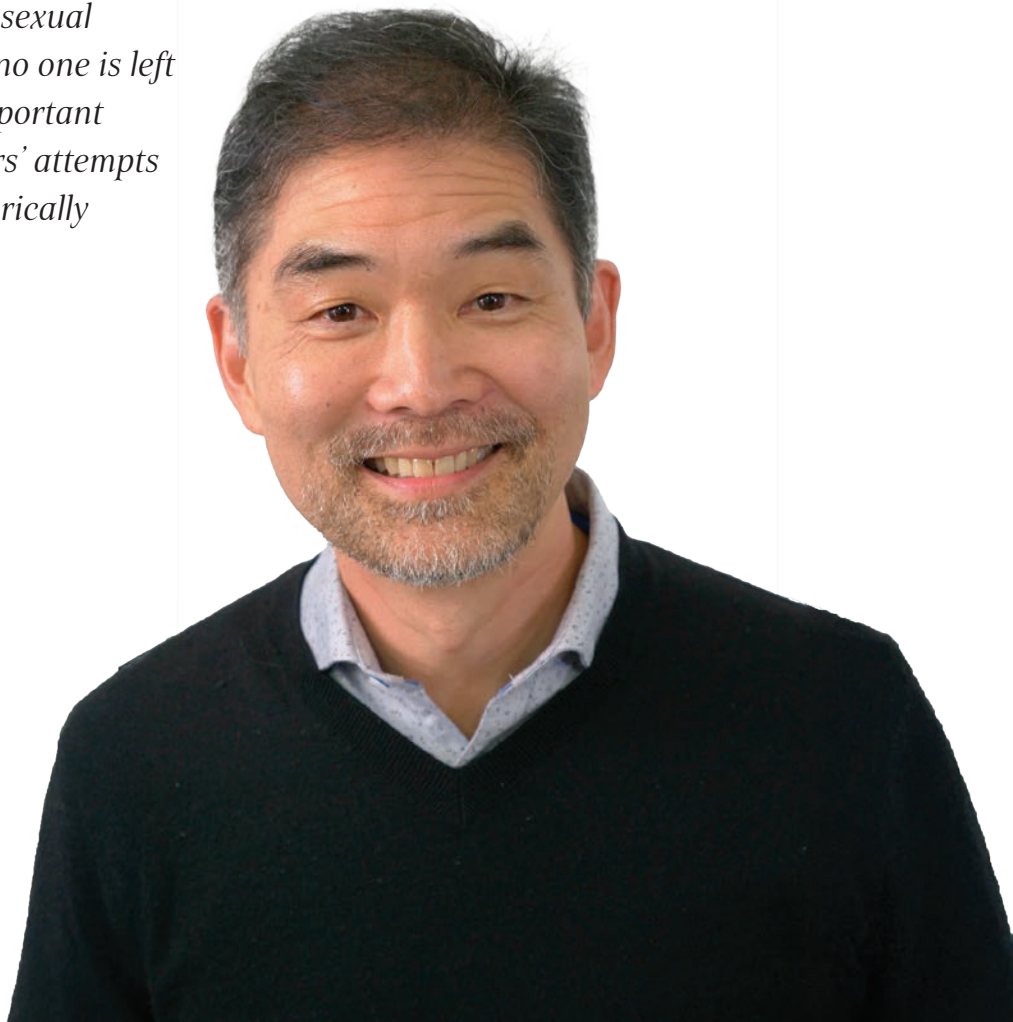


## STAN YOGI

*APPEAL has equipped a generation of leaders to fight big tobacco's exploitative targeting of AA and NH/PI communities and, in the process, has built grassroots power to tackle barriers to health equity and social justice.*

*APPEAL has been a trailblazer working across boundaries of ethnicity, race, sexual orientation and class so that no one is left behind. That work is more important than ever given federal leaders' attempts to erase the advances of historically marginalized communities..*

***Stan Yogi is currently a senior consultant with Klein & Roth Consulting and a noted author.***







*We pay tribute to those that have come before and on whose shoulders we stand. Through their wisdom, persistence and courage, our communities have been able to face the greatest challenges with resilience and power. For this, we are forever grateful to these leaders who became like our extended “family.” Sadly, we have lost some of our family over the years. The individuals below are a few of those champions who have provided long-lasting contributions to community and equity and represent the very best ideals of transformative leadership.*

IN MEMORIAM



**CHRISTOPHER  
N.H. JENKINS**



**DR. CALEB  
T.O. OTTO**



**MICHAEL J.  
WONG**



**DR. KEKUNI  
BLAISDELL**



**SEN. BEN  
PANGELINAN**



**DANA  
SHELTON**

*Not pictured*



**JOON-HO YU,  
MPH, PHD / CHAIR**

Joon is a research assistant professor in the Division of Genetic Medicine and Division of Bioethics and Palliative Care, Department of Pediatrics, University of Washington School of Medicine, and a faculty member at the Treuman Katz Center for Pediatric Bioethics, Seattle Children's Hospital.



**BAOLIA XIONG /  
SECRETARY**

Baolia Xiong is a Project Manager with the California Health Collaborative and has over 6 years of work experience working with tobacco prevention projects and 10 years' experience in grant management.



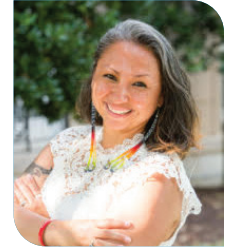
**SORA PARK  
TANJASIRI, DrPH,  
MPH / MEMBER**

Sora Park Tanjasiri, DrPH, MPH, is Professor in the Department of Health, Society and Behavior in the Program in Public Health, and Associate Director of Cancer Health Equity and Community Engagement in the Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of California, Irvine.



**COCO VILLALUZ  
(HIDATSA/  
ASSINIBOINE/  
CHAMORRO) /  
MEMBER**

CoCo Villaluz (Hidatsa/ Assiniboiné/Chamorro), Deputy Director at the American Indian Cancer Foundation, brings over two decades of expertise in community engagement, empowerment, and mobilization.



**ROD LEW, MPH /  
MEMBER**

Rod, founder and executive director of APPEAL, has over 35 years of experience in developing national models on cross cultural leadership, capacity building, community-based research, strategic planning, health equity and policy change. Rod has trained nearly 2000 community advocates from across the five major racial/ethnic groups and LGBTQ+s. Rod is the recipient of several public health and health equity awards including the Lester Breslow Lifetime Achievement Award from the UCLA School of Public Health.



**JAKE RYANN  
SUMIBCAY, DrPH,  
MPH, CHES /  
MEMBER**

Jake Ryann Sumibcay, DrPH, MPH, CHES (he/ him/his) is an Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Management at the Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa.



**LIZA MERRILL, BA /  
TREASURER**

Liza is a personable, trusted and respected community organizer with over 30 years of relationship building within the diverse communities in Arizona.



# BOARD





*APPEAL would like to thank all the staff who have worked and contributed to the organization throughout our 30 years.*

# STAFF OVER TIME



## CURRENT STAFF:



**ROD LEW**  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR



**TANA LEPULE**  
DIRECTOR OF  
NH/PI AFFAIRS



**PRIYA RAMAN**  
CAHPE3 NETWORK  
PROGRAM  
COORDINATOR



**KRISHNA  
MARMÉ**  
SPARC PROGRAM  
COORDINATOR



**KAREN NGUYEN**  
SPARC PROGRAM  
ASSOCIATE



**APPEAL**

## APPEAL TEAM OVER THE YEARS

### **Founding National Advisory Committees**

Dileep G. Bal  
Barbara Benavente  
Jacqueline Jamero Bergario  
Kim Ku'ulei Birnie  
Mary Anne Foo  
Senator Lou Leon Guerrero  
Martin Quach Huynh Ha  
Kaying Hang  
Reginald Ho  
Chris Jenkins  
Howard Koh  
Sarah Mesa  
Phuong Ngo  
Robin Shimizu  
Oh Sourichanh  
Dong Suh  
Sora Park Tanjasiri  
JoAnn Tsark

### **Founding National Partners**

Asian Health Services  
Jeffrey Caballero (AAPCHO)  
Moon Chen (AANCART)  
Ford Kuramoto (NAPAFASA)  
David Nakashima (APIAHF)

### **Original Transition Team**

Dileep G. Bal  
Jeffrey Caballero  
Mary Anne Foo  
Elaine Ishihara  
Peggy Saika  
JoAnn Tsark

### **Founding Board of Directors**

Dileep G. Bal  
Barbara Benavente  
Elaine Ishihara (Chair)  
Rod Lew  
JoAnn Tsark  
Stan Yogi

### **KEY CONSULTANTS:**

#### **Trainers**

David Nakashima  
Kevin Fong  
Concha Montaña  
Tana Lepule

#### **Evaluation**

Sora Park Tanjasiri  
Marjorie Kagawa-Singer  
Karen Yanigasako  
Curtiss Rooks  
Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati  
Linda Bosma

# TEAM

## APPEAL TEAM NOW

### 2025 National Advisory Committee

Uriah Blackwell  
Grace Garces Bordallo  
Calvin Chang  
Sheri Daniels  
Melenaite Fifita  
Scarlett Lin Gomez  
Elaine Ishihara  
Giridhar Mallya  
Vayong Moua  
Arnab Mukherjea  
Shamsun Nahar  
Jake Ryann Sumibcay  
Fahina Tavake-Pasi  
Elisa Tong  
Jennifer Tsui

### KEY CONSULTANTS:

#### Communications

Vincent Eng, The Veng Group

#### Evaluation

Linda Bosma

#### Facilitation

Laura Hamasaka

#### Graphic Design

Heather Niemann

#### Healing Circles

Kevin Fong

#### Health Equity

Lou Moerner

### Leadership Trainers

David Nakashima  
Concha Montaña

### Policy Change

Joyce Liu

### Videography

James Wu

### Event Planning



Twlia Laster  
Owner of Twlia Makes It Happen! Consulting Service and Travel with Twlia, a concierge travel service. She assists clients with

marketing, program development, public relations, conference management, health education, and group facilitation.



Pleshette Robertson  
CEO and Founder of Sacculturalhub.com and Chief Editor of THE HUB Magazine. She also serves as the Executive Director for

the Sac Cultural Hub Media Foundation that educates, empowers, and train young adults and women of color in underserved communities.



ANNIVERSARY



APPEAL

# CONTRIBUTORS

## **FUNDERS (current and past)**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
California Department of Public Health, Tobacco Prevention Program  
ClearWay Minnesota  
Minnesota Department of Health  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota  
Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program  
National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD)  
Truth Initiative

*(please note that no federal funds were used to pay for the 30th Anniversary Gala)*

## **DONORS**

### **Bronze Sponsor (\$5000)**

The Tanjasiri Family  
Rod Lew and Karen Rezai

### **Additional Donors (partial list)**

Joon Ho-Yu and Rebecca Engrav  
Baolia Xiong  
Liza Merrill  
CoCo Villaluz  
Jake Ryann Sumibcay  
African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council  
APICAT for Health  
Asian Health Services (AHS)  
Asian Services in Action (ASIA)  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF)  
May Chen  
Betty Lee Hawks and Dick Hawks  
Elaine Ishihara  
Lillian Lew  
The LOOP  
David Nakashima  
Tobacco Cessation Policy Research Center, UC Davis  
Elisa Tong

*We would like to thank all of our funders and donors for your generous support of APPEAL over 30 years!*



HAPPY 30TH ANNIVERSARY

# APPEAL

We Salute You!

*Congratulations on your courageous leadership, tireless efforts to advance health equity, and unwavering commitment to community health. Your dedication to serving Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders is truly inspiring and deeply appreciated.*

From The African American Tobacco  
Control Leadership Council,  
AMPLIFY! & FINISHING THE FIGHT



The African American  
Tobacco Control Leadership Council

[www.savingblacklives.org](http://www.savingblacklives.org) [www.amplify.love](http://www.amplify.love)



**CONGRATULATIONS**  
*to APPEAL for 30 years of*

- **Leadership Development**
- **Community Building**
- **Advancing Health Justice**

***We Celebrate and Thank you.***

**APICAT For Health**

1629 S Jackson St,  
Seattle, WA 98144



 **apicat206**  
[www.apicat.org](http://www.apicat.org)





## TCPRC celebrates APPEAL's 30th Anniversary of empowering communities and leadership

### Tobacco Cessation Policy Research Center (TCPRC)

The TCPRC is a community-academic partnership whose mission is to advance health care access, delivery, engagement, and equity for tobacco cessation. Key community partners include the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network and local public health partners. TCPRC is funded by California's Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program and housed at the University of California, Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center. Website: [tcprc.ucdavis.edu](http://tcprc.ucdavis.edu).

### Policy Studies - Research in Action

The TCPRC community and academic partners work on "rapid response" policy studies and briefs for local and statewide issues. Community stakeholder meetings and a Fall Summit promote bidirectional communication and learning. Current topics include:

- ✦ Access with community pharmacies
- ✦ Delivery in health care settings
- ✦ Engagement on flavored tobacco
- ✦ Equity with health plans

**Congratulations to all APPEAL Champions and Fellows including TCPRC faculty, community partners, and trainees!**

### Training the Next Generation

The TCPRC offers training opportunities for students, health care trainees, and early career researchers. An annual Spring Seminar includes community and public health speakers to educate about tobacco cessation and policy issues.



GREATER SACRAMENTO  
SMOKE & TOBACCO FREE  
COALITION

UC DAVIS  
HEALTH

COMPREHENSIVE  
CANCER CENTER

# Congratulations

ON 30 YEARS OF EMPOWERING  
AND INSPIRING SERVICE!

Thank you, APPEAL, for your dedication  
to health equity and advocacy. Our  
heartfelt appreciation for your important  
and life-saving work over the years that  
uplift the health of marginalized  
communities across the nation.

*Sincerely,*





# APIAHF

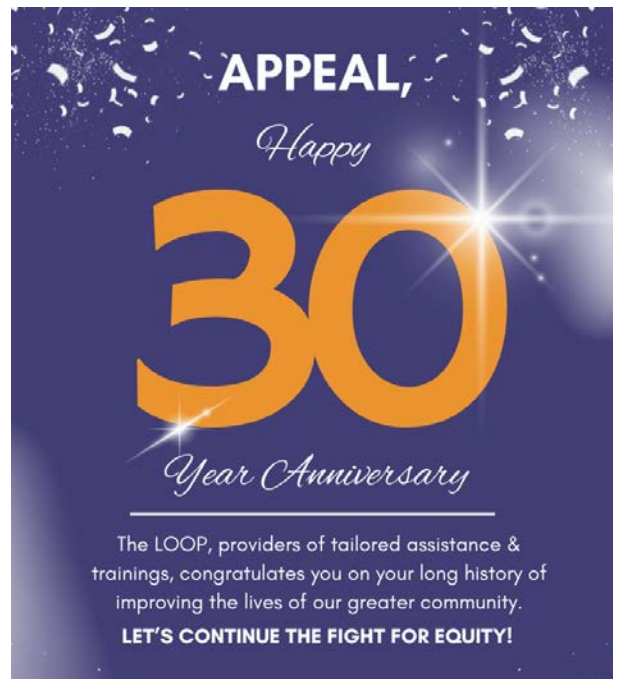
ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER  
AMERICAN HEALTH FORUM

461 Bush Street  
Suite 400  
San Francisco, CA 94108

[www.apiahf.org](http://www.apiahf.org)  
@APIAHF

Congratulations  
to APPEAL on  
their 30<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary!

APIAHF is the oldest and largest health advocacy organization working with Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities across the nation, in the US Territories, and with the US-affiliated Pacific jurisdictions. APIAHF envisions a healthier future for AANHPIs inspired and driven by community.



[theloop.ucsf.edu](http://theloop.ucsf.edu)

# Notes



# *Notes*



30<sup>th</sup>  
1994  
2024  
ANNIVERSARY



APPEAL







Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL)

2255 Morello Avenue, Suite 208 Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

[APPEALFORHEALTH.ORG](http://APPEALFORHEALTH.ORG)

STAY CONNECTED @APPEALFORHEALTH

