

From: CAPAJA <capaja-capaja.org@shared1.ccsend.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 7:38 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: CAPAJA eNewsletter - May 2026



May 2026 Newsletter

President's Message



May is AANHPI History Month. It is a time to reflect on and celebrate the important roles that Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders have played in our collective history. The resilience, hard work, and commitment to public service demonstrated by previous generations continue to inspire us today. This month invites us to honor that legacy while reaffirming our commitment to uphold fairness, promote inclusion, and

ensure equal access to justice. As reflected in this newsletter, the CAPAJA community remains deeply engaged in its shared dedication to these principles.

Jana Seng, CAPAJA President



Upcoming Events

CAPAJA ALJ Committee to

Present Zoom Program on AI

On May 12 at 12:15 pm, the CAPAJA Administrative Law Judges Committee will present a zoom program on AI Tools for Judges. This exciting program will provide CAPAJA Members with the ways to approach AI tools, handle AI-generated evidence and learn the judicial ethics surrounding AI use. The Moderators for this important discussion will be CAPAJA Members ALJ Annie Greenleaf of the California Department of Social Services and ALJ Kristin Rosi of the California Department of Insurance. The panelists will be Past CAPAJA President and CEO of American Leadership Forum Silicon Valley, Judge Erica R. Yew (ret.) of the Santa Clara Superior Court and Maura R. Grossman, Research Professor and former director in Women in Computer Science, David R. Cheriton School of Computer Science. Click the flyer for the link.

California Asian Pacific American Judges Association Administrative Law Judges Committee
Presents:

AI Tools for Judges

Discover how to approach AI tools, handle AI-generated evidence,
and learn the judicial ethics surrounding AI use.

Panelists:



Erica R. Yew
CEO of American Leadership Forum Silicon Valley
Retired Judge of Santa Clara County Superior Court



Maura R. Grossman
Research Professor & former director in
Women in Computer Science
David R. Cheriton School of Computer Science

Moderators:

ALJ Annie Greenleaf (CA Dept. Social Services)
ALJ Kristin Rosi (CA Dept. of Insurance)

Join us May 12th at 12:15 PM PST on Zoom!

Click → [Here](#) ←

or scan the QR Code
to join us on Zoom!



Meeting ID: 897 7568 9564 Passcode: 168028



Confirmation Hearing for CAPAJA Members

On May 22, there will be the confirmation hearing for two of our CAPAJA Members. Judge Deborah Chuang Servino of the Orange County Superior Court, nominated by Governor Newsom to become an Associate Justice of the 4th District Court of Appeal, Division 3, and Justice Joanne Motoike, nominated to become a Presiding Justice of the same division of the 4th DCA, will have their hearings before Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero, Attorney General Rob Bonta and Senior Presiding Justice Manuel Ramirez. They will take place at the California Supreme Court in San Francisco. Justice Motoike will be at 10:30 and Judge Servino will be at 1:30 pm. The hearing will be streamed live on the California Court Newsroom.

Commission on Judicial Appointments
Confirmation Hearing

JUDGE STEPHEN GOORVITCH
as associate justice of the Second Appellate District, Division Two (Los Angeles)

JUSTICE JOANNE MOTOIKE
as presiding justice of the Fourth Appellate District, Division Three (Santa Ana)

JUDGE AMY GUERRA
as associate justice of the Fifth Appellate District (Fresno)

JUDGE ERAN M. BERMUDEZ
as associate justice of the Fourth Appellate District, Division One (San Diego)

JUDGE DEBORAH C. SERVINO
as associate justice of the Fourth Appellate District, Division Three (Santa Ana)

MAY 22, 2026

Webcast live on newsroom.courts.ca.gov

CALIFORNIA COURTS NEWSROOM

The Commission on Judicial Appointments will hold public, in-person hearings in San Francisco to consider the appointments of Judge Stephen Goorvitch, Justice Joanne Motoike, Judge Amy Guerra, Judge Eran M. Bermudez, and Judge Deborah C. Servino.

CAPAJA Member to be Honored by APABA

On June 26, 2026, APABA will be having their 28th Annual Installation Dinner, and CAPAJA Member Bryant Yang will be honored that evening. It will be at the NBC Seafood Restaurant (404 S. Atlantic Blvd., Monterey Park, CA) from 6-9 pm. If you are interested in attending, please RSVP by June 5 at APABA.org. If you would like to sit with fellow CAPAJA members, please email Judge Jana Seng at JSeng@lacourt.org.

**ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN
BAR ASSOCIATION**

Cordially Invites You to Our

**28TH ANNUAL
INSTALLATION DINNER**

A Monterey Park Homecoming

Friday, June 26, 2026

6 PM - 9 PM

NBC Seafood Restaurant

404 S. Atlantic Boulevard
Monterey Park, California

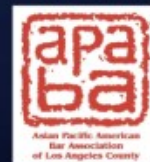
HONORING:

U.S. Representative Judy Chu

Judge Bryant Yang

Monterey Park Bruggemeyer Library

RSVP by June 5th at APABA.org



CAPAJA Member to be Keynote Speaker

Past President Audra Ibarra will be the keynote speaker at the Filipino Bar Association of Northern California (FBANC) on June 26. This event sells out every year so make sure to get your tickets soon at fbanc.org.

Tickets for judges and their guests are at a discounted rate of \$150 each. Please purchase your tickets and email Judge Ben Reyes (btr2esq@gmail.com) in order to try to sit together. There is word that an "after party" is being planned, which always includes dancing!



FILIPINO BAR ASSOCIATION
OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

46TH ANNUAL GALA

Hyatt Regency
5 Embarcadero Ctr
SF, CA 94111

Fri June 26, 2026
5:00 - 6:30pm: cocktail hour
6:30 - 10:00pm: dinner



Keynote Speaker
Hon. Audra Ibarra

FBANC 46 fbanc.org/gala



CAPAJA Summer Dinner in Orange County

On June 27, 2026, CAPAJA will hold an outdoor summer dinner at a private residence in Orange County (near the intersection of the 91 and 55 freeways). As a tribute to our fabulous trip to Malaysia this past February, we will be serving Malaysian food. Family members are welcome!

The cost will be \$40 per person, and you can RSVP by emailing Judge Michelle Ahnn (mahnn@lacourt.org). Once you have RSVP'd, you will receive information on payment options. The address will be sent out 1 week before the event to everyone who paid. Make sure you RSVP no later than June 10, 2026.

This is a members only (and their family) event so make sure you are current on your 2026 CAPAJA dues! Yearly memberships are from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31. If you are unsure about your membership status, please email Judge Michelle Ahnn (mahn@lacourt.org) or Judge Sunil Kulkarni (SKulkarni@scscourt.org).



CAPAJA DINNER

Summer Celebration

CAPAJA will have an outdoor dinner at a private residence on Sat. June 27, 2026 in Orange County. Cost is \$40 per person.

*Did you miss out on the CAPAJA trip to Malaysia in Feb. 2026?
Or did you attend and wish you were back?*

We will be serving Malaysian food in recognition of the fabulous trip that CAPAJA organized!

To RSVP, please email Judge Michelle Ahnn (mahnn@lacourt.org) and you will receive payment options.

Please RSVP by June 10, 2026.

RSVP to
mahnn@lacourt.org

CAPAJA DINNER

June 27, 2026

Orange County

(near the intersection of the 91 and 55 Freeways – address will be emailed 1 week prior to event)

3:30 pm for outdoor fun (optional)

6:00 pm for dinner

Family members are welcome

Outdoor fun:

Swimming

Tennis/Pickleball

Golf chipping game

New CAPAJA Members

On March 27, Governor Gavin Newsom appointed two new API judges: Cherisse Cleofe of the Kiesel Law Firm to the Los Angeles County Superior Court and Justine Cephus of the San Francisco City Attorney’s Office to the San Francisco County Superior Court.

And on April 15, the Governor nominated CAPAJA Member Judge Deborah Chuang Servino of the Orange County Superior Court to become an Associate Justice of the California District Court of Appeal, District 4, Division 3! Deb has been an active member of CAPAJA since her appointment to the OCSC in 2009 and she was endorsed by CAPAJA in her application for elevation to the DCA.

In the same announcement, the Governor appointed Gary Tokumori of the Los Angeles law firm of Parker Milliken, Clark, O'Hara & Samuelson to the Los Angeles Superior Court. Gary was a judicial mentee of CAPAJA Member Judge Bruce Iwasaki and was also endorsed by CAPAJA. The Governor also appointed CAPAJA Member Commissioner Tiffany Poncy to the Orange County Superior Court. CAPAJA endorsed Commissioner Poncy for the judgeship.

CAPAJA is thrilled to have another appellate justice in its ranks and to have helped a Commissioner member become a Judge. We are also excited to welcome three new members to our ranks. The new judges have been welcomed into the CAPAJA family and are excited to get involved with its activities. Be sure to welcome them when you see them next!

Past Events



CAPAJA Members Speak on Public Interest Panel

On March 19, Presiding Justice Tracie Brown of the 1st DCA, Div. 4 and Judge Victor Hwang of the San Francisco County Superior Court spoke on a public interest law panel sponsored by the U.C. Berkeley School of Law APALSA. The panel spoke on wide-ranging topics, including Circuit clerkships, the City Attorney's Office and non-profit organizations and drew a number of students interested in public interest work.



Justice Tracie Brown (far left) and Judge Victor Hwang (2nd from left) along with other panel members.



CAPAJA Members Speak at APALSA Event at U. of LaVerne

On March 25, CAPAJA Members spoke on a panel at the APALSA Sidebar Session at the University of LaVerne College of Law. Participating were CAPAJA Member Judge Glenn Yabuno, Judge Stephanie Tañada and Judge Cecilia Joo of the San Bernardino County Superior Court. The judges led a lively discussion that engaged the students and educated them about the practice of law and the path to the judiciary.



*Above, from left to right: Judge Cecilia Joo, Judge Stephanie Tañada, and Judge Glenn Yabuno.
Below, the three judges pictured with the law students they inspired!*





UCLAW Students Benefit from Speed Mentoring by CAPAJA Members

On April 1, 2026, CAPAJA members Justice Audra Mori and Judges Sophia Choi, Mark Singerton, Tiffany Tai went to UCLA to speed mentor law students. This event was organized by CAPAJA's Law School Outreach Committee and UCLAW's APILSA. The participants were 1Ls-3LS and several LLM international students, one of whom is currently serving as a judge in Japan. The students were assigned to groups of 4-5 people, and they had the opportunity to ask the judges about careers in the legal field and about their paths to the bench. The event was well received and CAPAJA has already been invited to come back next year!



UCLAW students along with (starting with 4th from the left): Judge Sophia Choi (Riverside), Judge Mark Singerton (Riverside), Judge Tiffany Tai (Los Angeles), and Justice Audra Mori (2nd District Court of Appeal).



CAPAJA Assists with Cultural Banquet at Chapman University Fowler School of Law

CAPAJA helped Chapman University in planning the Cultural Crossroads Banquet, entitled “One Tree, Many Roots” held on April 2. The event featured a Judicial Panel called “The Strength of Our Roots: Stories from the Legal Community,” which featured CAPAJA’s own Judge Bryan Clavecilla and Judge Elia Naqvi of the Orange County Superior Court.



From left to right: Judge Bryan Clavecilla (OC), Judge Gary Polk (Riverside), Judge Julie Swain (OC), Judge Karen Robinson (OC), Judge Elia Naqvi (OC), and Judge Tania Vallejo (OC).



CAPAJA Panel at USC Law

On April 2, CAPAJA Member Judge Lee Tsao of the Los Angeles Superior Court put together a panel of other CAPAJA Members to speak to the APALSA

of USC Gould School of Law. The topic of the panel was Externships and Clerkships and featured Judge Tim Saito of the LASC, retired LASC Judge Holly Fujie and Judge Wes Hsu of the USDC CD Cal. A lively and enlightening discussion was held in which the panel engaged with students to provide advice on their careers and how to conduct themselves as law students and lawyers. Many students came up to the panel members afterwards or contacted them directly to say that the discussion was extremely interesting and helpful and to ask for assistance in applying for and choosing externships and clerkships.



Judicial Reception Held for CAPAJA Member

A reception was held for CAPAJA Member Judge Ami Sagel in Anaheim Hills on April 3, 2026. Guest speakers included Judge Kate Lewis and CAPAJA Members Judge Bryan Clavecilla, and Judge Vibhav Mittal, all of the Orange County Superior Court.



CAPAJA Celebrates AAPI Law Students

On April 3, 2026, CAPAJA members attended California Western Law School's APALSA's Final Verdict Dinner. The event celebrated APALSA students' accomplishments throughout the school year and provided networking opportunities for the law students with AAPI judges and lawyers in the San Diego legal community. In the photo below, CAPAJA members pictured include United States District Court, Southern District of California Magistrate Judge Steve B. Chu, San Diego Superior Court Judge Roy S. Lai, San Diego Superior Court Judge Mark T. Cumba, and San Diego Superior Court Judge Selena D. Epley.



CAPAJA Members Provide Career Advice to Chapman Law School Students

On April 8, CAPAJA members OCSC Judges Ami Sagel, Elia Naqvi and Vib Mittal met with Chapman Law students to discuss their careers (including their respective paths to the bench) and the importance of mentorship. It was an opportunity to highlight Judge Sagel as the first female South Asian judge in Orange County. Chapman's South Asian Law Students Association organized the event, and the recently formed South Asian Bar Association of Orange County provided delicious Indian food for the law students.



Judge Vibhav Mittal (3rd from left), Judge Elia Naqvi (center in red) and Judge Ami Sagel (3rd from right) along with Chapman law students.



CAPAJA Member Inspires College Students

On April 8, 2026, Judge Christine Gonong was featured as a panelist for the Law, Government, and Education segment of UCLA's Inter-Networking Week, hosted by the UCLA Pilipino Alumni Association (PAA) and Samahang Pilipino Education and Retention Program (SPEAR).

The panel was created to encourage and inspire college students to explore career opportunities in public service. During the meet-and-greet, the students expressed interest in applying to law school and visiting their local courthouses to watch court proceedings.



Judge Christine Gonong (bottom left in pink jacket) with participants of the Law, Government, and Education panel and UCLA college students.



CAPAJA Past President Honored by SCCLA

On April 9, Past CAPAJA President Judge Elaine Lu of the Los Angeles Superior Court was honored by the Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association with its Judicial Service Award at its 51st Annual Installation and Awards Banquet. Elaine gave a very moving speech about her immigrant background. The audience, which included many of her colleagues and fellow CAPAJA Members, greatly enjoyed hearing Elaine share her personal story. So many people wanted to attend to honor Elaine that there was fierce competition for seats at the four LASC tables! Elaine was given an excellent introduction at the banquet by her colleague on the Court, CAPAJA Member Judge Wendy Chang.



CAPAJA Members and others celebrate Judge Elaine Lu's award! Front row from left to right: Judge Christine Gonong, Judge (ret.) Holly Fujie, Chief Judge Dolly Gee (US District Court, Central District), and Judge Elaine Lu. On the front far right is ALJ (ret.) Diane Tan.



From left to right: Judge Linda Sun, Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino, Judge Christine Gonong, Judge Faye Chen Barnouw, Judge Tiffany Tai, Judge Terry Truong, and Judge Alex Giza.



From left to right: Judge Wendy Chang, Judge Christine Gonong, and Justice Michelle Kim.



CAPAJA Helps Present Historical Re-Enactment

On April 15, 2026, CAPAJA members Judge Rita Lin of the N.D. CA, Judge Victor Hwang of the San Francisco Superior Court and Presiding Justice Tracie Brown of the 6th DCA participated in the Northern District of California Historical Society’s presentation entitled, “Birthright Citizenship & The 14th Amendment.” The program featured a reenactment of *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, using a script written by 2nd Cir. Judge Denny Chin and the Asian American Bar Association of New York. The judges took on the roles of various judges and justices relevant to the *Wong Kim Ark* case and its modern-day reverberations in the *Barbara* birthright citizenship case currently pending before the U.S. Supreme Court. The event also featured remarks by *Wong Kim Ark*’s descendants, Sandra and Norman Wong and a panel discussion featuring a local scholar on Chinese American history as well as professors from UC Law San Francisco and UC Berkeley School of Law. Rita was one of the main organizers of the event, which was very well attended!



CAPAJA Members Give Keynote Address and Install KABA Officers

On April 16, Magistrate Judge Anna Y. Park of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California gave a rousing Keynote Address supporting the rule of law and the role of API, especially Korean American lawyers and judges, in upholding the Constitution at the 46th Annual Board of Governors Installation and Awards Banquet of the Korean American Bar Association of Southern California. CAPAJA Member Justice Corey Lee of the 4th DCA swore in the new Officers and Governors of KABA-SoCal.



Justice Corey Lee administers the oath of office to the new KABA Board members.



CAPAJA members with Governor Newsom's Judicial Appointments Secretary Luis Céspedes. From left to right: Judge Mike Madokoro, Judge Tammy Chung Ryu, Judge Lisa Coen, Judge Ann Park, Judge Gary Tanaka, Secretary Luis Céspedes, Judge Jacob Yim, Judge Mark Kim, Judge Esther Kim, Judge Bryant Yang, Judge (ret.) Holly Fujie, Justice Corey Lee, Judge Tony Cho, Judge Bruce Iwasaki, and LASC Assistant Presiding Judge Ricardo Ocampo.



CAPAJA Members Attend UCLAW APILSA Banquet

On April 16, 2026, members of CAPAJA attended UCLA Law APILSA's Alumni Banquet, held at the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center (JACCC). It was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with fellow alumni, meet current students, and spend time with the broader UCLA Law AAPI community. Among the honorees was CAPAJA Member Justice Michelle Kim of the 2d DCA, who was recognized as Alumna of the Year.



Alumna of the Year, Justice Michelle Kim (front center in cream jacket) surrounded by UCLA Alum and students.



From left to right: Judge Christine Gonong, Judge Terry Truong, Judge Rob Villeza, Judge Hoa Hoang, Judge Tim Saito, Justice Michelle Kim, Judge Lee Tsao, and Judge Michelle Ahnn.



CAPAJA Member Honored for Mock Trial Coaching

CAPAJA Member Judge Bryan Clavecilla (Orange) was recognized as a Coach of the Year at the Constitutional Rights Foundation Orange County Mock Trial Awards Reception April 16, 2026. CAPAJA Member Judge Richard Lee (Orange) presented the award as one of the Master of Ceremonies. Also present were CAPAJA Members Judge Cheri Pham (Orange) and Comm. Harris Siddiq (Orange). Congratulations, Bryan!



Judge Richard Lee (left) and Judge Bryan Clavecilla (right) holding his award.



Judge Richard Lee (left) and Judge Cheri Pham (right) enjoying the celebration at the CRF Orange County Mock Trial Awards.



CAPAJA Member Nominated for Award

CAPAJA Member Judge Bryan Clavecilla of the Orange County Superior Court was nominated for the OneOC Spirit of Volunteerism Award along with Justice Thomas Delaney (4th DCA Division 3). He is pictured (3rd from left) with leaders of the Orange County Unity Bar and the Orange County Women Lawyers Association at the event, which was held on April 22, 2026 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Orange County.



CAPAJA Participates in LASC Affinity Group Mentorship Mixer

On April 23, CAPAJA co-sponsored an Affinity Group Mentorship Mixer with the Los Angeles Superior Court Judges Association and the Association of African American California Judicial Officers (AACJO), California Latino Judges (CLJA), the Los Angeles Latino Judicial Officers Association (LJOA), the California Jewish Judicial Officers Association (CJJOA), California Women Judges (CWJ) and Out at LACSC. CAPAJA President Judge Jana Seng spoke at the event, which was attended by many CAPAJA Members. Jana invited attendees to learn about membership and mentorship opportunities with judicial affinity groups of the Superior Court.



CAPAJA President Judge Jana Seng explains to the audience the mentorship opportunities offered by CAPAJA.



*A few of the CAPAJA members in attendance at the Affinity Mixer (from left to right):
Front row: Judge Christine Gonong, Judge (ret.) Holly Fujie, and Judge Faye Chen Barnouw.
Middle row: Judge Upinder Kalra, newly appointed Judge Cherisse Cleofe, and Judge Hoa Hoang
Back row: Judge Esther Ro, Judge Tiffany Tai, newly appointed Judge Gary Tokumori, Judge Linda Sun, Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino, Judge Grace Kim, Judge Sumako McCallum, Judge Curtis Kin, and Judge Bryant Yang*



Theater Outing for CAPAJA Members

On April 26, the Special Events Committee of the Los Angeles Superior Court organized a theater outing to watch *Flower Drum Song*, presented by East West Players and the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center. CAPAJA members had a scrumptious dim sum brunch at Mama Lu's Dumpling before the show. After the show, some CAPAJA members had the opportunity to chat with the cast of the musical.



At Mama Lu's Dumpling (from left to right): Judge Esther Ro, Judge Tiffany Tai, Judge (ret.) Holly Fujie, CAPAJA President Judge Jana Seng, Judge Michelle Ahn, Judge Hoa Hoang, Commissioner Jenny Cheung Marino, Judge Helen Yang, Judge Chistine Gonong, and Judge Ruth Kwan.



CAPAJA members along with other LASC judges and family members enjoy a beautiful moment outside before heading into the Aratani Theater to watch Flower Drum Song.



CAPAJA members with some of the cast from Flower Drum Song.



CAPAJA MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

On April 9, 2026, the Daily Journal profiled Judge Esther Kim of the Los Angeles Superior Court. Esther discusses how her path to a career in law is rooted in her family's experiences as an immigrant family and being raised by a mother who worked three jobs to support her children. Esther starts her workday by reading a sign in her chambers that states "Stay humble, work hard, be kind." Based on the comments from attorneys who appear before her, it seems that Esther is able to achieve these three goals as she presides over even contentious family law matters. Great profile, Esther!

One of our newer members, Judge Jacob Yim of the LASC, was profiled on April 21 in the Daily Journal. He has been on the bench for just over one year, and the attorneys interviewed for the article praised him for his ability to handle a high-volume court and the sensitivity he displays in handling cases in the Rapid Diversion Program at Compton Court. The profile begins and ends by mentioning Jacob's love for fishing. Perhaps we should have a CAPAJA fishing trip in the future to give Jacob a chance to show off his fishing skills???

The DJ ended the month of April by profiling Judge Tony Cho, husband of Judge Esther Kim who was profiled on April 9. The article focuses on Tony's transition from decades long work in criminal law to now presiding over a family law calendar. Based on the interviews from the attorneys in the article, Tony is flourishing in this new assignment. The article also mentions Tony's family's experience immigrating from South Korea. Clearly, the struggles of his parents working multiple jobs to support their children have paid off because all three of their children became lawyers!

With gratitude for our CAPAJA members,

Jana Seng, CAPAJA President
Nathan Vu, CAPAJA President-Elect



If you have news related to CAPAJA or our CAPAJA members, or if you have learned of a new potential CAPAJA member, please send an email to Newsletter Editor Holly Fujie at communications@capaja.org and we will feature it in the next newsletter. Photographs are encouraged!

To pay your CAPAJA membership dues (memberships renew on Jan. 1 of each year), please click below.

[Click to Renew Membership Dues](#)

CAPAJA Student Scholarship



CAPAJA grants scholarships to law students every year. To help support CAPAJA and the law students, please consider making a donation.

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