



# 20/21 REFLECTIONS

## Chapter 25 - AAPI Heritage Month

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*As we give voice to the diverse experiences of students and families in this pandemic, I am focusing our attention today on some of the challenges that have faced, and continue to face, the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community.*

There are a few reasons this is timely. In addition to May being AAPI Heritage Month, there has been growing national attention to the rise in discrimination and hate crimes directed at the AAPI community.

As AAPI families have had to grapple with this, they have also had to grapple with a lack of representation in various aspects of society. Just this month, [a study](#) found that out of the 1,300 top-grossing movies since 2007, just 44 films featured an Asian or Pacific Islander lead or co-lead performer. And, about a third of those 44 films starred the same person...Dwayne Johnson, a.k.a. The Rock.

Today's reflection, from Maria Chua, SHHS Coordinator, powerfully recounts the long history of anti-AAPI discrimination, with a challenge for all of us to educate ourselves further. Thank you, Maria, for this poignant, necessary, and thoroughly-researched

reflection!

### Maria's Reflection

May is formally designated as Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month. While the acknowledgement of Asian Americans and our contributions have always been important, the unprecedented escalation of anti-Asian hate over the past year makes the observance of AAPI Heritage Month more significant now than ever. President Biden recently stated, “In the midst of a difficult year of pain and fear, we reflect on the tradition of leadership, resilience, and courage shown by [Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander] communities, and recommit to the struggle for AANHPI equity.”

AAPI communities are experiencing an alarming increase in pandemic-fueled racist rhetoric, violence and hate. According to a report by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, [hate crimes](#) against Asian Americans in major U.S. cities grew nearly [150 percent in 2020](#)... and the numbers continue to surge. The first quarter of 2021 saw a [169 percent increase](#) in anti-Asian hate crimes over this period last year, mostly targeting women and the elderly. One of the most traumatic events took place in March of this year, when a gunman fatally shot eight people, including six Asian women, in a series of killings in the Atlanta area.

Anti-AAPI discrimination did not begin with the pandemic. There is [a long history of discrimination and injustice](#) faced by Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, including the [Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882](#), the [incarceration of Japanese American](#) citizens during World War II, the [1989 mass shooting of Southeast Asian refugee children](#), and the targeting of South Asian Americans, especially those who are Muslim, Hindu or Sikh, after 9/11.

As an Asian American social worker and leader, my role is to ensure that we as a District advocate fiercely, ensure appropriate services, and have ongoing informative conversations about AAPI heritage that are culturally relevant and addressed on a continuous basis and not just when we see the headlines of a tragic event. I have reflected much upon this during the pandemic and have been heartened by the collaborative equity work done across other districts and community agencies. I will fight for the same within our own district.

My challenge to all District staff is to educate ourselves on AAPI history and culture, [celebrate their contributions to America](#), and [challenge anti-AAPI bias on all fronts](#). The Office of Human Relations, Diversity and Equity has curated extensive resources for our school communities to engage in dialogue about what everyone can do to help end Anti-Asian racism and discrimination. Please visit their [site](#) as well as the following ones for more information.

<https://asianpacificheritage.gov/>

<https://www.pbs.org/articles/2021/05/celebrate-asian-american-pacific-islander-heritage-month-2021/>

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/humanizing-asian-americans-in-the-classroom-through-childrens-literature>

*Sincerely,*

***Pia and Maria***

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