

Statement on Asian Pacific American Heritage Month 2012

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Tuesday, 01 May 2012 10:06

This year marks a series of anniversaries for the AAPI community, including the 30th Anniversary since the unpunished murder of Vincent Chin in Detroit, Michigan; the 70th Anniversary since the signing of Executive Order 9066 which placed 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent in internment camps, my family included; and the 130th Anniversary since the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Addressing these injustices throughout our nation's history has not only strengthened civil rights and civil liberties, but also has helped to make our country a more perfect union.

Beyond acknowledging the challenges we have faced as a community, APA Heritage Month also recognizes the progress we have made in striving for excellence in leadership, diversity, and inclusion in all sectors of society. We've seen this being demonstrated through the growing number of AAPI federal judges and elected officials at the local, state, and national level; the rise of AAPI celebrities, entertainers, and artists in the mainstream media; the successes we have seen after creating access to health care for millions of AAPIs; and even the stardom of individuals like Jeremy Lin, for example, who have made us feel proud to be AAPI.

Having served as the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus Chair Emeritus, Immigration Taskforce Chair, and Appropriations Taskforce Chair, this year I am honored to serve the AAPI community and to ensure that America as a whole sees firsthand our valuable contributions and legacy. As we celebrate APA Heritage Month this May, let us take this month – and every month for that matter – to celebrate the values of leadership, diversity, and inclusion exemplified by AAPIs throughout the nation.