

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia Office of the Chief Clerk Room 402, City Hall Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 220550)

RESOLUTION

Honoring fourteen of Philadelphia's most influential Asian Pacific Americans during Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month: Judge Marutani, Judge Ida Chen, Dr. Philip Jaisohn, In Ho Oh, Chief Inspector Wong, Vai Sikahema, Siani Lee, Grace Uyehera, Cecilia Moy Yep, Nick Shenoy, Julie Wong, Sarah Chang, Piquant "Skip" Voluntad Jr., and Reverend Peter Hwang.

WHEREAS, Dr. Philip Jaisohn (January 7, 1864 - January 5, 1951) was a Korean American political activist and physician. He moved to the United States as a political refugee and was the first Korean to receive an American medical degree and the first Korean naturalized citizen of the United States. Jaisohn was a key organizer of the First Korean Congress in Philadelphia, which declared Korean independence from imperial Japan; and

WHEREAS, In Ho Oh was a 26-year-old graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania who was tragically bludgeoned to death by a group of West Philly youths when he was mailing a letter to his parents in Korea in 1958. The U.S. government issued a formal apology to the Oh family. Oh's family forgave the youth and raised money for their rehabilitation, education and spiritual guidance. The In Ho Oh story was reported nationally and internationally in such publications as Time, Life, and Guidepost. A film, "Epistle from the Korea," was made. Mayor Richard Dillworth served on the board of the In Ho Oh Memorial Center and Marion Anderson attended its Center. In Ho Oh is buried at Old Pine Church. His tombstone reads, "To Turn Sorrow into Christian Purpose"; and

WHEREAS, The Honorable William Marutani (March 21, 1923 – November 15, 2004) was the first Asian American judge in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. During World War II, Marutani and his family were incarcerated at the Pinedale Assembly Center for 6 months in Fresno, California. As a second lieutenant, he served in the U.S. Military Counterintelligence Corps in Japan before finishing his undergraduate and law degrees and settling in Philadelphia. In 1967, he delivered an amicus before the United States Supreme Court in favor of interracial marriage in the Loving v. Virginia case. In 1975, Marutani was appointed to the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County. During his 11-year tenure as a judge, he issued the important decision requiring all-boys Central High School to admit female students in 1983. In

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1981, President Carter appointed him to the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians; and

WHEREAS, The Honorable Ida Chen is the first Asian American female judge to serve in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Born in Hong Kong, Chen immigrated to the U.S. from Indonesia. She earned both her undergraduate and law degrees from Temple University. She has served as a judge for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since her appointment in 1987. She currently presides in the Family Court Division of the Court of Common Pleas. Chen has also served as a trial attorney with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) from 1976-1986, the first Asian American to serve on the Philadelphia Human Relations Commission in 1986, chair of the Ethics Committee of the 21st Century Review Forum for the City of Philadelphia in 2003-2004, and chair of the United Way Ethics Task Force in 2012. Language and equitable access to the courts encouraged her to co-found the Asian American Women's Coalition with Cecelia Moy Yep in 1987. Chen is a current board member of many local social justice and mutual aid oriented organizations, including the Samuel S. Fels Fund; and

WHEREAS, Cecilia Moy Yep is known as the “Godmother of Chinatown.” Born and raised in Philadelphia, she founded the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC) in 1966 in response to the scheduled demolition Holy Redeemer Church and School for the construction of the Vine Street Expressway. Yep and PCDC were successful in defending the Holy Redeemer Church and School. PCDC has developed many projects securing affordable housing and economic and commercial opportunities for Chinatown residents. In 2000, she also led the community in protesting proposed site for the new baseball stadium. In 1987, she and Ida Chen co-founded the Asian American Women's Coalition (AAWC) to support and uplift Asian American women. Yep continues to serve on the Board of PCDC and still lives in Chinatown spending time with her family and the community; and

WHEREAS, Grace Uyehera (July 4, 1919 – June 22, 2014) was a Japanese American social worker and activist who led the campaign to obtain a formal government apology for the WWII internment of Japanese Americans. Her efforts culminated in Ronald Reagan signing the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. Born in Stockton, California, she studied music at the University of the Pacific until she and her family were interned at the Rohwer camp in Arkansas. Upon release, she finished her studies at St. Cloud State Teachers College in Minnesota and then moved to the Philadelphia area. While living in West Chester, she and her husband organized the Philadelphia chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL); Uyehera became one of its first women national leaders; and

WHEREAS, Julie Wong is a Philadelphia Chinatown real estate mogul and banker. She is credited with founding the first Asian American owned bank in Philadelphia, First Commercial Bank of Philadelphia, which she chaired and directed until 1995. First Commercial won the trust of Philadelphia Asian business owners and community members with its services in multiple languages and long hours. In 1997, she opened a second bank in Philadelphia Chinatown, United Asian Bank. Wong previously served as president of the Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia (AACCGP) and currently serves on the board; and

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WHEREAS, In 2006, Narashima “Nick” B. Shenoy founded the Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia (AACCGP). An electrical engineer and project manager by training, he applied his training in executive leadership to AACCGP to represent Asian American businesses. AACCGP partners with businesses, individual entrepreneurs, and nonprofits to establish business relationships with the Asian community, promote economic growth for Asian Businesses, and unite various Asian businesses and organizations to work for the growth of Asian and minority businesses. Aside from chairing AACCGP, Shenoy is also the Chairman of the Pan Asian Association of Greater Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Sarah Chang is a Korean American classical violinist, performing as a soloist with the world’s major orchestras. Born in Philadelphia and raised in nearby New Jersey, she started playing violin at age 4. She was a child prodigy who debuted with the New York Philharmonic and Philadelphia Orchestra at age 8 and then recorded her first album at age 10. Chang studied at Julliard throughout her childhood. She served as a cultural ambassador for the U.S. and was also appointed to the Presidential Commission on Russian Relations by President Obama; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Peter Hwang has served as president of The Friendship Council of the United States of America, an organization which facilitates racial reconciliation between the African American and Korean communities; since 1991, Hwang has led 15 Friendship Tours to South Korea for Black clergy members from Philadelphia to visit and fellowship with Korean church leaders; and

WHEREAS, Anthony Wong (April 17, 1928 - September 8, 2021) was the Chief Inspector of the Philadelphia Police and remains the highest ranking Asian American in the Department’s history. He served in the U.S. Army in World War II and the Korean War. He joined the Philadelphia Police Department, As an officer, Wong was assigned to Narcotics, Vice Enforcement, Patrol. As a strong believer in education, most significantly he worked in the Police Training Bureau. Also, he taught criminal justice courses at the Community College of Philadelphia. Within the Philadelphia community, Wong served on the boards of the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC) and On Lok House; and

WHEREAS, Piquant “Skip” Voluntad Jr. (1931 – 2016) was a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, local small business owner behind the Kona Kai and Windjammer restaurants on City Avenue, and active civic leader in his community. Voluntad graduated from Northeast High School and lived in the Germantown section of the City for most of his life. Voluntad established support systems for local Asian immigrants, connecting them with business resources and social services. He served as chairman of the board of the Pan Asian Association in Chinatown and also served on the board for the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey; now, and

WHEREAS, Siani Lee was the First Asian American anchor in Philadelphia. She gained popularity in Philadelphia from her six years anchoring at WCAU-TV and her two years co-anchoring with Larry Kane of KYW-3 Eyewitness News. She began her career in 1987 at

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WTKR-TV in Norfolk and continued to build her career through various anchoring and reporting positions including WTOG-TV in Savannah, GA, and WMAR-TV in Baltimore, MD. She received the prestigious Dateline Award from the local Society of Professional Journalism for her in depth reporting on race relations. She was inducted into “The Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia’s Hall of Fame” on November 29, 2009; and

WHEREAS, Vai Sikahema was a Philadelphia Eagles football player and the first Tongan to play in the NFL. First drafted by the St. Louis Cardinals in 1986, he later played for the Green Bay Packers. Upon retiring in 1994, he began a very successful 26 year career as a sports broadcaster working for WCAU in Philadelphia and later NBC. Sikehema was inducted into the Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia Hall of Fame on November 22, 2013; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby HONORS fourteen of Philadelphia’s most influential Asian Pacific Americans during Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month: Judge Marutani, Judge Ida Chen, Dr. Philip Jaisohn, In Ho Oh, Chief Inspector Wong, Vai Sikahema, Siani Lee, Grace Uyehera, Cecilia Moy Yep, Nick Shenoy, Julie Wong, and Sarah Chang.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the ninth day of June, 2022.

Darrell L. Clarke
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Oh

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Oh, Squilla, Bass, Gilmore Richardson and Green