

# MAY IS ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month (APAHM) is celebrated in May to commemorate the history, culture and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. May was chosen to commemorate the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to America on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad (by many Chinese laborers) on May 10, 1869. In 1992, the official designation of May as APAHM was signed into law.

2020 Theme: Unite Our Nation by Empowering Equality

The theme was selected by the [Federal Asian Pacific American Council \(FAPAC\)](#)

## IN the SPOTLIGHT: *Karen K. Narasaki, Civil and Human Rights Leader*



Photo: Karen K. Narasaki

Karen K. Narasaki is a national civil and human rights leader. She most recently served as a Commissioner on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, appointed by President Obama in July 2014. She is the immediate past president and executive director of the Asian American Justice Center, one of the nation's premier civil rights organizations. Prior to that she was the Washington Representative for the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL). And before JACL, she was an attorney with Perkins Coie.

Karen was born in Seattle, WA. She is the twin sister of playwright and actor Ken Narasaki. She became interested in civil rights when at age eight she accidentally overheard the pained voices of her parents discussing where their family would live next. Her father was a second generation Japanese American, served in the famed 442nd Regimental Combat Team of the U.S. Army, the all-Japanese American unit that fought in

Europe during World War II, and an engineer at Boeing, but the possibility of buying his family a house in Seattle was out of the question due to racial covenants at the time.

Karen graduated from Yale University with a B.A. in Economics and Political Science and a J.D. from the UCLA School of Law. She has been recognized twice by Washingtonian Magazine as one of the "100 most powerful women in Washington." Karen now lives and works in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.