

MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

PROCLAMATION NO. 64

Proclaiming May 2026 as Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in Multnomah County, Oregon.

Multnomah County Finds:

- A. The 2026 national theme, 'Power in Unity: Strengthening Communities Together,' reminds us that while the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AA and NHPI) diaspora reflects extraordinary diversity in language, faith, migration stories, and lived experiences, our collective strength is realized when we work together in solidarity toward equity, opportunity, and shared liberation. We acknowledge and celebrate the significant role AA and NHPI leaders and community members play in Portland's present and future - contributing across the fields of science, education, agriculture, government, commerce, health care, technology, and the arts.
- B. AA and NHPI heritage has long been a defining force in the history of Oregon and Multnomah County. As part of the earliest settlers to Oregon, Native Hawaiians crossed the Pacific Ocean to establish fur trading posts along the Oregon Trail. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, South Asian and Chinese people migrated to towns up and down the West Coast, working in lumber and agriculture. At one point, Portland's Chinatown was the second largest in the country. Miyo Iwakoshi, the first documented Japanese immigrant to Oregon, settled in Gresham, and Japanese farmers have cultivated East County for generations. Thousands of Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Hmong, and Mien refugees resettled in Oregon beginning in 1976. Today, the County serves as a safe harbor for climate migrants from the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau, and political asylees from places like Myanmar, Nepal, and Afghanistan.
- C. Throughout history, AA and NHPI communities have endured and resisted violence, discrimination, prohibitions on land and business ownership, family separation, and forced incarceration and dispossession in Multnomah County. Despite these challenges, they have prevailed and individuals from these communities have defied the odds to succeed in the realms of art, science, business, sports, civic leadership, and more. Portlanders like Leah Hing and Hazel Ying Lee became among the first Asian American women to earn a pilot's license in the country. Minoru Yasui is the only Oregonian to have received the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his defense of civil rights. Bill Naito visioned, championed, and shaped downtown Portland and Old Town, and many of Portland's most iconic landmarks, including Pioneer Square and the White Stag sign.

- D. More recently, Oregon made history with five Vietnamese Americans elected to the state House of Representatives - the highest number in any state legislature nationally. There is also Asian American representation on the Portland City Council, Metro Council, Portland Public School Board, and Multnomah County Circuit Court. Here at Multnomah County, the Board of County Commissioners has had continuous representation from an Asian American or Pacific Islander individual since 2016 - including the first Pacific Islander elected official in the history of Oregon, Vincent Kamaka O'Kalani Jones-Dixon. The success of these individuals and the communities that they belong to is a testament to their courage, resilience, dedication, and ingenuity.
- E. Along with these accomplishments, systemic challenges persist for AA and NHPI communities, such as concerns about community safety, inequities in social determinants of health, and disparities in Multnomah County's employment trends.
- F. The Trump Administration's travel ban and visa processing pause have severely restricted immigration from 13 Asian and two Pacific Island countries – preventing families from being reunited in the U.S. As a result, the number of Asian people arrested by ICE has more than tripled. Most have no criminal record. Immigrants in detention have reported horrific conditions, significant language barriers, and limited access to legal counsel. At least one individual has died as a result: Nurul Amin Shah, a nearly blind Rohingya refugee from Myanmar, died five days after U.S. Border Patrol agents dropped him off in the parking lot of a Tim Hortons on a cold winter night without notifying his family or attorney. Given that most Asian and Pacific Islanders living in the U.S. are immigrants or have family members who are foreign born, the administration's actions present a clear threat to these communities.
- G. Pacific Islanders migrate to Oregon to seek refuge and safety from injustices such as climate displacement, environmental contamination, and loss of indigenous sovereignty, and yet face disproportionate hardships from climate change and environmental hazards in the Pacific Northwest. A 2023 report from the Multnomah County Health Department shows NHPI communities experience negative impacts from several environmental justice indicators, such as living near air pollution sources and a lack of sufficient access to walkable neighborhoods, access to transit, or shade canopy where they live. Pacific Islanders were more likely than other groups to visit the emergency department or urgent care due to heat related illnesses. An equitable and just climate future cannot be achieved without ensuring Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have access to vital resources and data for health and decision making. Climate actions by Multnomah County must include traditional indigenous knowledge and protect access to cultural resources for Pacific Islanders whenever possible.
- H. Here in Multnomah County, there is also room for improvement to support AA and NHPI staff. The 2025 Countywide Equity Audit found that Asian American

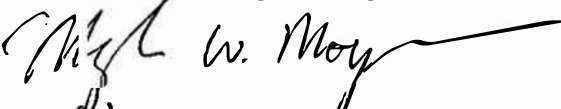

employees are less likely to be supervisors. Additionally, data in the Multnomah County Employment Trends showed that only 9.4% of AA and 0.5% of NHPI staff held Senior Management and Leadership positions. Pacific Islander employees are a small population in Multnomah County, with 39 employees as of 2025. More effort is needed to understand NHPI employee experiences and disaggregate their data from other racial or combined categories. Supporting AA and NHPI employees and recognizing their excellence at work is essential to fulfilling Multnomah County's commitments to diversity and equity.



- I. Multnomah County is committed to working with our AA and NHPI workforce and community organizations to eliminate disparities, strengthen our communities, and implement policies and programs that lead to significant and meaningful change here at the County and for communities we serve.

Multnomah County Proclaims:

The month of May 2026 is Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in Multnomah County, Oregon. Multnomah County encourages all residents to observe this month, to learn more about Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities, and to continue working towards racial equity and social justice.

SIGNED this 4th day of May, 2026.

REVIEWED:

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FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

By:



Jenny M. Madkour, County Attorney

SPONSORED BY: *Commissioner Vince Jones-Dixon, Employees of Color Employee Resource Group, Multnomah County Chair Jessica Vega Pederson, Commissioner Shannon Singleton, Commissioner Julia Brim-Edwards, Commissioner Meghan Moyer*