

WE ARE OHSU

CELEBRATING
ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER MONTH



Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month is celebrated in May to honor and recognize the contributions, achievements and influence of Asian Pacific Islander communities who shaped the history and culture of the United States.

Jeanie Jew was a staffer on Capitol Hill, a fourth generation Chinese American who played a pivotal role in the created of Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Jeanie Jew approached Reps. Frank Horton who then introduced House Joint Resolution 540 that proclaimed the first 10 days of May as Pacific/Asian American Heritage Week in 1977. In 1990, congress passed Public Law 101-283 that expanded the observance from 10 days to a month. The 10-day celebration honored the date that marked the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the U.S. and the completion on the transcontinental railroad, which Chinese workers contributed to significantly. Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month is now celebrated nationwide every year, honored with local events and sharing history.

WE ARE OHSU

OHSU is a diverse campus with members with different identities. Diversity is one of our core values, and we strive to create an environment of respect and inclusion. We acknowledge that diversity is not always seen, and we want to be intentional. The Center for Diversity and Inclusion started an initiative to highlight OHSU members in an interview series named We Are OHSU. This will go on all year long, where we can uplift and celebrate members of all communities, highlighting their impact on campus and their daily lives and showing everyone the wonderful communities we belong to.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the Asian Pacific Islander Employee Resource Group for helping curate thoughtful questions for this interview and nominating Yi Cao.



WE ARE OHSU YI CAO

Yi is a data analyst for the Office of Academic Affairs in the School of Nursing. In her role, Yi conducts and analyzes student satisfaction surveys and report findings that facilitate improvements in programing. Yi often collaborates with internal and external agencies and helps people understand student data to better serve students. Yi is also the current treasurer for the Asian Pacific Islander Employee Resource Group. She has been at OHSU for almost 8 years.

What do you love most about your job?

First and foremost, I love data. I love working with data. Data enables educators to see gaps and insights that help to make informed decisions. I also really enjoy participating in professional development opportunities. There are a lot ranging from webinars to conferences, virtual and in-person workshops like all sorts of that. Most recently, I was able to connect with

my former supervisor and mentor who hired me into my current position. I joined the Asian Pacific Islander Employee Resource Group leadership as their treasurer. Being part of this ERG has given me great opportunities to connect with folks outside my department, allowing me to reflect on my own identity. If not for the API ERG, I would not have had the opportunity to meet people from across the institution and work alongside them.

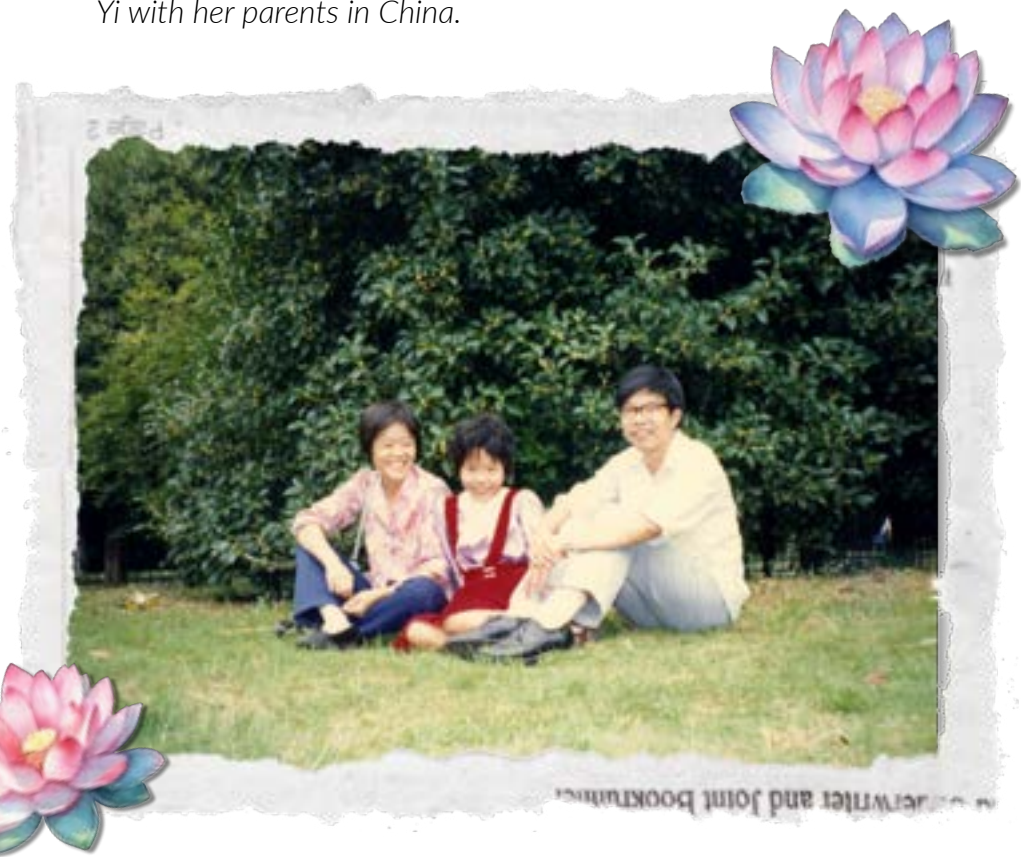
The AAPI region is so large and diverse. We want to shine a light on the individual cultures of the region. Can you share a bit about yourself and your cultural heritage?

I grew up in China for the first 22 years of my life. I was born in mainland China in a city called Hangzhou. It is the capital of Zhejiang Province which is an eastern coast province of China. Hangzhou is located about 100 miles from Shanghai. I think people from Hangzhou are so proud of their city because it is full of history and rich culture.

We thought that everybody in the world knew about us, but when I moved to the United States, wow, I was so disappointed that, like, nobody knew this city. So, I always mention Shanghai to people, so they know where Hangzhou is. I hope that people know my hometown. It is a major economic and e-commerce hub in China and the second biggest city in Yangtze Delta after Shanghai.

The place where I grew up was very communal. It was a tight-knit community in a big, large metro city. People who live there all share a common identity through their employment at a university called Zhejiang University. My dad was employed there. It has a very unique culture because university housing in China was deeply subsidized, and it is considered as one of the greatest benefits of working at a university. Unlike the universities here in the United States, faculty staff and employees live on campus with their families. I had never lived outside of that campus. Pretty much all my childhood friends, we





went to the same daycare, kindergarten and elementary school. I remember so vividly that I spent hours playing outside with my friends after school every day in the gated community. We were not really supervised by any adults. We ran around because the community was safe. The campus was very large and very green and had lots of trees. As kids, we were very mischievous, and we took a lot of fruits, beans, and other things from the trees inside campus. We tried to cook the edamame by setting up a campfire and oh my goodness, it was, I thought those beans were badly burned, and it was just like, I'm glad we didn't cause a disaster. It was truly a children's paradise. We all really loved each other and we were all good friends, we keep in contact with each other.

What brings you joy about your heritage and culture?

I love celebrating my cultural heritage with people who have similar cultural backgrounds to mine. I love sharing what I love, where I come from, my cultural roots with others who may not have similar experiences. Living in the United States enriches my life because I got to experience firsthand living with multi-cultural communities and interact with people that immigrated here to this country and people who have been living here for a long time. There are different ethnic groups, and each has a kind of unique culture or cultural heritage that they pass down to the next generations. So, it's interesting to learn and listen to other people's stories. We can always find something in common. China

is a homogeneous country and most people who live in China are Han Chinese, so I did not get exposed to such a diverse culture and people until I moved to the United States.

What are some meaningful cultural traditions that you and your family honor?

We have a tradition called Grave sweeping also known as Qingming Festival. It falls on the fifth day of the solar term on Chinese lunar calendar. It's like grave sweeping or tomb sweeping day. It usually happens on April 5. During this time, families visit the tombs of their ancestors to clean their grave sites, make ritual offerings that include traditional food dishes and burning joss sticks.

When I was in China, we would visit the graveyard site of my grandparents. We cleaned the site, made offerings like tangerines. My parents no longer like burning joss sticks, it's not good for their health and it's bad for the environment. Now that I live in the United States, my dad calls me to remind me to join the virtual sweeping so I can still participate in this tradition.

The second tradition is the eve of Chinese New Year and that is something that we always do as a family. We used to watch a





TV program called the Spring Festival Gala and it has the largest audience in China or any entertainment show in the world because of the large population in China. It's like a variety show that includes music, dance, comedy and drama. My parents always watch that show after they eat their New Year's Eve dinner. After I moved to the U.S., I stopped watching that show because of time difference and not having access to the program. My

daughter who is 4-year-old attends a bilingual program here in Portland, and they organize an event where kids do live performances. So, I got to see the New Year's Gala live through my daughter's bi-lingual program for the last two years. This is like culture continuity and like part of my cultural identity and tradition has been passed on to my children.

Who or what has inspired you to work in healthcare?

I never imagined I would get a job in the healthcare industry. At first, I thought OHSU was just a hospital and did not know they had academic programs and needed people like me who could do data analysis. It is nice and a privilege to work in the healthcare industry because of my dad. During the Cultural Revolution, my father was a "barefoot doctor" in rural China. During that time, China was extremely poor and under resourced. After my dad graduated from high school, he received basic but intensive medical training for several months to provide basic healthcare for rural communities where there was a severe shortage of qualified doctors or nurses. Training barefoot doctors was a low-tech, low-cost strategy that achieved high health outcomes. After the Cultural Revolution, he was determined to be a military doctor and applied for a medical school. Unfortunately, he did not get accepted because of unfair treatment and a lack of social capital.

So, the fact that I now work in the health industry, I feel like I am getting closer to his unfinished dreams of being a doctor. Healthcare professionals will always hold a very special place in my heart. In my work, I have come to know front line healthcare workers, faculty, administrator, and staff who are the backbone of this organization and I really value the opportunity to work

alongside them.

In what ways has your culture shaped your identity?

My identity has evolved over the years for sure. When I was in China, I never really thought about the topic of identity. Like I mentioned before, I belong to the largest ethnic group, the Han Chinese. It is made up over 90% of China's population. The subject of identity was not something my family, my community, my friends and I talked about in our everyday life. I was sort of "identity unaware." After I move to the U.S. to attend graduate school, I immediately became very aware of my identity. I felt a strong sense of belonging to the international student community. I participated in numerous events and support groups for international students. I have made a lot of friends by doing so, some of them I consider my lifetime friends. Now, I have spent almost half of my lifetime in the U.S., my sense of identity has been broadened. It became much broader, but less clear compared with the time in graduate school. It is more complex and not easily defined, my multiple group membership and socialization definitely has an impact on who I am now. There are certainly some challenges at times, however for the most part, I am proud of my cultural heritage. I feel fortunate to get to experience Eastern and Western cultures firsthand. This is the one of the main purposes why I

came to the U.S. in the first place twenty years ago.

If you could give any advice to young API professionals, what would it be?

I would advise young API professionals to join affinity groups that reflect their passion. I am really grateful for my API ERG group. I am glad to serve on the API ERG leadership team! If I didn't take the opportunity, I would have missed so many great leadership opportunities and wonderful relationships that have been built. It gives me so much courage and confidence both professionally and in my personal life.

What AAPI figure do you look up to the most and why?

Jack Ma, who is a highly successful entrepreneur, helps small businesses to thrive in China. He is the co-founder and former executive chairman of Alibaba Group. He is a global ambassador for Chinese business. He also strongly believes in young people and women, credited them as the solutions to tomorrow.

Joan Block is another person, she's a Korean American, co-founder of the Hepatitis B Foundation. Block and his husband, Dr. Timothy Block and others started the foundation in 1991. The goal was to find a cure for the liver infection and improve patients' quality of life. Joan Block remains a tireless advocate of the foundation until now. I am grateful

for their dedication and contribution. This is because in the U.S., 1 in 12 Asian Americans is chronically infected with Hep B, in comparison to 1 in 1000 non-Hispanic white Americans. This is one of the greatest racial health disparities in the U.S. (Stanford Medicine, <https://med.stanford.edu/liver/education/whatishepb.html>).

Anything you would like to add?

I want to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for all the people who helped me during this journey! The financial support I received to study in the U.S., and all kinds of support academically, professionally, and personally to help me succeed. I just want to thank everyone who believes in me.

