

ASIAN AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENTS IN SAFETY

May is Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, a time when we celebrate the countless ways Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have contributed and are contributing to the culture and success of our country and our world. By continuing this recognition throughout the year and taking time to reflect on the achievements of individuals within your own profession and community, the month becomes all the more significant.

Whether by participating in occupational safety and health directly or significantly influencing its effectiveness, these 10 people have more than earned their place in the history books.



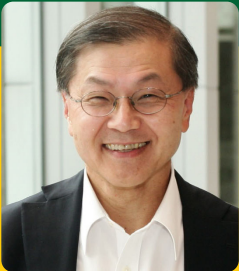
Patsy Matsu Takemoto Mink

Mink was born on the island of Maui in 1927 and became the first Asian American and woman from Hawaii elected to Congress in 1964. In 1972, Mink co-authored the Title IX Amendment of the Higher Education Act, prohibiting sex-based discrimination in federally funded educational institutions. She was a lifelong advocate for racial and gender equity.



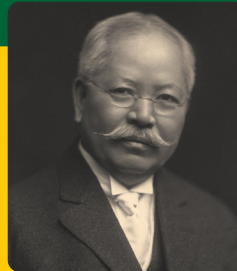
Ai-jen Poo

Poo co-founded Domestic Workers United in 2000 and was instrumental in passing New York's groundbreaking Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in 2010, granting basic labor protections to more than 200,000 people. She is a recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship and the director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance.



David Ho

Ho is a physician and virologist who has been on the front lines of AIDS research since the early 1980s. His research into HIV replication changed treatments forever. Ho is the founding scientific director and CEO of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center and currently leads a COVID-19 research team.



Jokichi Takamine

Takamine was a Japanese American biochemist and entrepreneur. In 1887, he co-founded a Tokyo fertilizer company and isolated a revolutionary starch-digesting enzyme he called Takadiastase. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1890, established a lab, and became the first person to isolate and purify a hormone (adrenaline/epinephrine) from natural sources.



Kalpana Chawla

Chawla was an engineer who began work with NASA in 1988. Her areas of expertise included aerodynamic optimization and robotics. In 1997, she was a robotic arm operator on the space shuttle Columbia, becoming the first woman of Indian descent in space. Five years later, she died on the space shuttle Columbia when it disintegrated re-entering the Earth's atmosphere.



Philip Vera Cruz

Cruz was a farmworker and organizer who co-founded the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (now the United Farm Workers) and helped lead the Delano Grape Strike alongside Cesar Chavez and others in 1965. After working for years in California without labor protections, he was passionate about safety and granting others access to a living wage.



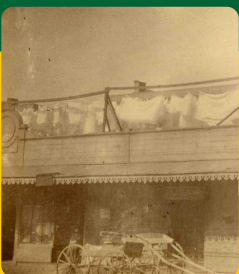
Steven Chu

Chu is a physicist, educator, former U.S. secretary of energy (2009-13) and former president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2019). In 1997, he and his team were awarded the Nobel Prize for their research into cooling and trapping atoms with laser light. He currently is a professor of physics and physiology at Stanford University.



Norman Mineta

Mineta is the first Asian American to serve in two presidential cabinets — as U.S. secretary of commerce in 2000 and as U.S. secretary of transportation from 2001 to 2006. As a member of Congress in 1991, he introduced the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act that, among other things, mandated airbags in many vehicles.



Lee Yick

Yick was a laundry operator who won an 1886 U.S. Supreme Court case clarifying that the racially discriminatory application of a racially neutral law is a violation of the 14th Amendment. The San Francisco law was ostensibly related to fire safety, requiring laundries in wooden buildings to get a permit. But only Chinese American business owners were denied.



Tammy Duckworth

Duckworth has been a U.S. senator from Illinois since 2017. A military veteran injured in combat, she was the first woman with a disability elected to Congress and the first senator to give birth while in office. She sits on numerous committees related to safety, including the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation and the Committee on Environment and Public Works.