

*Food for Thought Edition*

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# HIV FORUM

RECIPES FOR LEADERSHIP

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MANCHUI LEUNG

## HIV FORUM

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As HIV and health advocates, we are always looking for good company. Company who will hold up the other side of the banner during the rally. Company who will encourage us to speak up even when our voices tremble. Company who will nurse a good cup of coffee (or something stronger) with us to talk, debate and listen to our new ideas. Company who will be honest with us, tell us what they *really* think, and still continue to believe in us. Company who wants change just as much as we do. Company who is brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous. Company who can come together as strangers and, after sharing delicious and rich food for thought, leave as friends.

## SEARCHING FOR GOOD COMPANY

Over the years, APIAHF's HIV program has had the privilege to keep company with people we are proud to call our allies, mentors, partners and friends in the movement to improve Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander health and wellness. We continue to put our best efforts forward in building strong, diverse and unified leadership. In our advocacy work, trainings, capacity building activities and publications, we use a leadership framework adopted from researchers Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner. This framework emphasizes five practices that will ensure strong, creative and diverse leadership.

In this special edition of *HIV Forum*, we highlight five leaders -Jaimie Kahale, Chaiwon Kim, Mark Molina, Jacob Smith Yang and Micha Suarez - who demonstrate the leadership practices of *Modeling the Way, Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Empowering Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart*. We also honor one leader - Suki Terada Ports - who exemplifies ALL the leadership practices and continues to be instrumental in changing systems to meet the needs of women, people of color, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, the poor, immigrants and people living with HIV/AIDS. We have all directly or indirectly benefited from her many acts of generosity, brilliance, sympathy, support and activism.

Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders living with HIV/AIDS, their family and friends and AIDS advocates have all made significant and long-lasting contributions to the health movement across all communities. The AIDS movement changed the way this society thinks about the correlation between disease and social forces, the politics of public health and the importance of community involvement in programming, research, funding and policymaking. While we have made significant inroads, there still remains a silence about the growing impact of HIV/AIDS in Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities. We want you to join us in advocating for the health and well-being of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders by speaking out against HIV/AIDS stigma and shame and finding ways to get involved.

Our success is predicated on leaders such as Suki. We hope you learn from them as much as we have, and imagine yourself as someone who overcomes personal challenges and stigma to be a role model like Jaimie, refuses to remain voiceless like Chaiwon, brings people together to form a collaborative vision like Mark, shares power to inspire a new generation of leaders like Jacob and makes an authentic connection with the community while baking delicious pastries to share with others like Micha! We look forward to sharing your good and thoughtful company.

Noosheh Jan! (Farsi)  
ManChui

*"Working with youth is my passion. Many of the youth's behaviors and experiences are similar to what I had come from and what I had been through. In sharing my experiences with the youth, about getting infected with HIV, drugs and alcohol and domestic violence, I hope to inspire them and help them realize that they also have other options and choices."*

# Jaimie Kahale MODELS THE WAY

By Ed Tepporn



Photo by Brian Callahan

Jaimie (center) and her two sons, Brandon (left) and Nainoa

Actions often speak louder than words. This is the heart of the leadership practice of "modeling the way." Strong leaders define their own personal values, clearly articulate them to others and set the example by aligning their actions with these values. **Jaimie Kahale** of the Life Foundation in Honolulu, Hawai'i exemplifies the power of "modeling the way."

Jaimie was a married mother with two children when she was first diagnosed with HIV in 1990. Soon after, a nurse told her that people with a positive attitude can live longer. Despite some very challenging experiences, including her husband's death in 1995 from AIDS, Jaimie made the conscious decision to continue to heed the nurse's advice.

"It took a year to accept my own HIV diagnosis. I realized that I could live to die or I could live to live with this disease. I chose the latter."

Acting upon this, Jaimie learned as much as possible about HIV, including her own treatment. She got involved with Life Foundation's Speakers' Bureau and eventually joined their staff in July 1999, building her leadership in programs serving at-risk youth, women, families and couples.

Jaimie has actively participated in several APIAHF meetings, trainings and networks. "Meeting leaders and others living with HIV/AIDS made me believe I really could live

and be a positive role model. I was inspired watching others who were standing up and speaking out. They modeled the way for me."

Jaimie brought these lessons back to Hawai'i. "I wanted to have control over how my HIV status got out. I didn't want friends or family to learn about me through the gossip channels. I wanted to be the one in control of disclosing my status. I learned that the more I shared with them, the more support I received and felt."

Yet, many Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders living with HIV/AIDS still find it challenging to openly disclose their HIV status. "I realize that my experiences may be unique. But for me, HIV has given me a purpose. I know now that I am walking through this experience because there is a greater learning from it."

APIAHF is proud to recognize Jaimie Kahale for her strength in overcoming personal challenges as well as for her efforts to raise awareness about HIV and fight against stigma. By openly speaking out about her personal experiences living with HIV, she is modeling the way for Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities.

**FAVORITE FOOD:** "I just love food in general. My favorite dish today is **Thai eggplant and tofu**. But I have to say that I am first and foremost a chocaholic."

# Chaiwon Kim CHALLENGES THE PROCESS

By ManChui Leung

The movement to improve Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander health is ignited by leaders who challenge the process and find opportunities to change the status quo. These leaders like to take risks and try innovative ways to advance their agenda and unite people to find a common cause. Even though there are many failures along the way, these disappointments are seen as learning opportunities to further hone their strategy and message. They are often seen as fearless, charismatic and focused.

**CHAIWON KIM**, the Executive Director of the Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS) in Doraville, GA has been challenging the process for the past 18 years by raising the visibility of the Asian immigrant and refugee communities in the South. "Even though we are a smaller community, it is not okay to ignore us. We are given excuses when we want better data and services." Chaiwon challenges excuses with an analogy, "Let's say you have four children. You still provide for all of them, even the small one, because they are all important."

With this fearlessness and focus, she has led CPACS from a handful of volunteers to being one of the largest health and human service agencies in the South serving the Asian community. This year, APIAHF brought together Chaiwon and other Asian American and Pacific Islander HIV and health leaders to Washington DC to sharpen their advocacy skills and visit their Congressional representatives to communicate a clear message on how HIV impacts Asians Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. The visits to "the Hill" were an opportunity to educate and inform Congress of the importance of fully funding the Minority AIDS Initiative, passing the current health disparities legislation and making an inquiry to the Centers for

recommendations on Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander data, research, and programming needs. Chaiwon came to advocate with other leaders "because we have been voiceless for so long, and I can't take it anymore. I'm fed up and yet we don't have enough resources for the growing needs of our community".

Visiting her Congressional representatives in Washington DC was a new experience for Chaiwon. The Senators and Representatives from Georgia continue to be unaware of the HIV/AIDS and other health needs of the Asian community, so she was focused on getting them to see these needs. She also saw this as an opportunity to improve relationships between CPAC, the Asian community and Georgia Congressional Representatives. Before the advocacy training and the visits, Chaiwon thought advocating to Congress was something

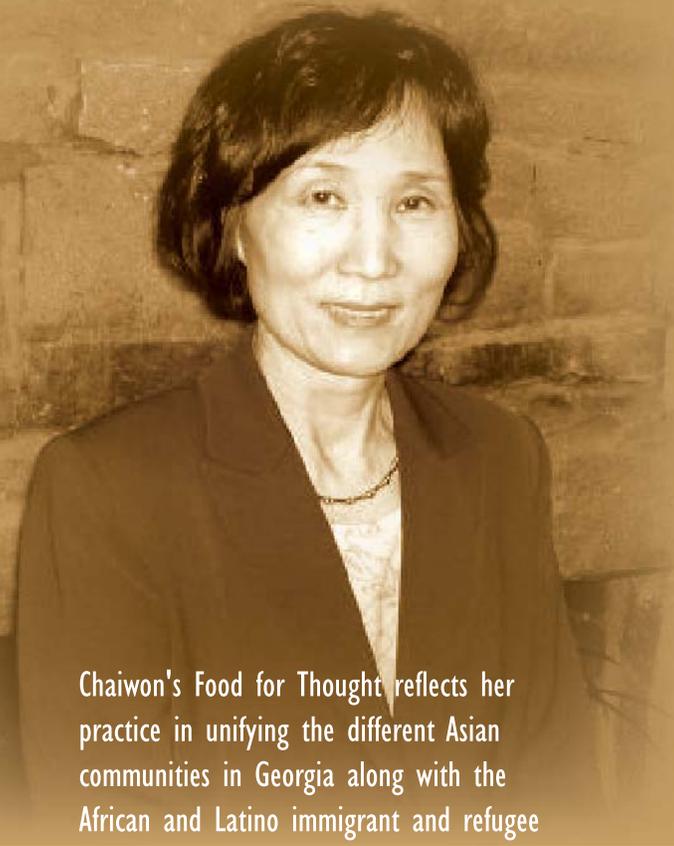


Photo courtesy of CPACS

Chaiwon's Food for Thought reflects her practice in unifying the different Asian communities in Georgia along with the African and Latino immigrant and refugee communities. "*All Asians eat rice - that puts us all together, and unites us,*" she laughs.

far away and inaccessible that "didn't have anything to do with me. I thought it wasn't going to change anything or make a dent". Despite her hesitation, she found it easy to talk with the Congressional staff and convey a strong, clear message about supporting Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander health. She felt if she could go to Washington DC, she could also advocate with increased frequency in Georgia and Atlanta by making more visits to policymakers and extending them invitations to CPACS events.

Since her Hill visits, staff from Representative Tom Price's Washington DC and district offices (GA-6) have been in contact with her. They have shown eagerness to learn more about the Asian community and to get more involved with Asian health issues. She has invited her congresspeople to attend CPAC's 2008 Together Empowering Asians (TEA) Walk, an annual walk-a-thon and community fair to raise the visibility of a united Asian community. Chaiwon reflects, "I realize if we keep advocating for the needs of our community - it will change".

**FAVORITE FOOD:** When not eating rice, Chaiwon enjoys her favorite foods, a **Hershey almond chocolate bar and French vanilla ice cream** from Baskin Robbins.

# Mark Molina INSPIRES A SHARED VISION

By Christian Alvez

**M**ARK MOLINA from Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI) found it hard to accept when the Department of Health in Santa Clara County, California told him that local HIV/AIDS data on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders was limited because "there is not much to report on." With little data, there were also no culturally and linguistically competent services for over 26% of the population. Mark knew that while Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders represented a small number of HIV/AIDS cases, there was a rising number of new infections\*. He thought, "If there are no services, where would people go?" With that important question in mind, he sought help from other community leaders and began to push for a local voice for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.

With advocacy skills gained through participating in trainings such as APIAHF's Fostering Advocacy and Community Empowerment Skills (FACES) trainings, he enlisted the help of other community leaders and organizations. He also gathered information on community needs through networking with providers, actively participating on the local community planning group and conducting outreach to people at risk for HIV.

For Mark, to inspire a shared vision and mobilize a community is to lay a thread, organizing efforts among local advocates. "The community leaders know that I know what they are talking about. I have made a connection with the community because I see the issue first hand. It is the kind of authenticity that you can build." Mark was successful in bringing new people together to meet, strategize and provide support. "I was very open to suggestions...so it really helped me to shape my knowledge of the community."

Mark put forward an HIV/AIDS prevention agenda for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders and built his case to the county by using data collected through focus groups, creating fact sheets, and bringing in experts to illustrate the depth of need. Over time, AACI started to provide HIV/AIDS prevention services for at-risk populations. Mark's work also benefited all communities since it was AACI's involvement in the APIAHF-convened Men of Asia Testing for HIV Study which pressed Santa Clara county to adopt HIV rapid testing technology in their county-wide testing policies.



Photo courtesy of Mark Molina

*"If you want support  
you also need to empathize with  
what people are doing."*

Today, through Mark's leadership, AACI provides HIV/AIDS services to Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and services to Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and serves as a leader in HIV Prevention for all of Santa Clara County.

Mark could not have done all of that by himself. He continues to inspire a shared vision with others by tapping into common goals, interests and values, buoyed by the belief that one can make a difference. APIAHF is an enthusiastic partner in Mark Molina's shared vision and leadership.

\*"Between 1996 and early 2003, the proportion of new AIDS cases that are among Asians and Pacific Islanders more than doubled from 4.5% to 9.8%," Santa Clara County 2005-2008 HIV Prevention plan.

**FAVORITE FOOD:** Pancit Bihon

"My mom would always make it for my birthday...she said it's for 'long life'."



**JACOB SMITH YANG**, Executive Director for Massachusetts Asians & Pacific Islanders for Health (MAP for Health) exemplifies the leadership practice of Empowering Others to Act, a skill that APIAHF cultivates in all of the HIV leaders we work with through our capacity building program to strengthen organizations. By sharing his power with his staff, Jacob creates an environment where his team feels invested in the agency's accomplishments and ensures that MAP for Health continues to develop strong community leaders.

## Jacob Smith Yang EMPOWERS OTHERS TO ACT

By Alan Yee

*"I try to make my actions and decisions very transparent and walk people through the process so they understand and have faith in how we do business at MAP, and can carry that forward in their work."*

**FAVORITE FOOD: Dumplings.** "All kinds are delicious. They also remind that things are not always as they seem on the surface; sometimes the true substance lies beneath."

Jacob puts a high value on communication with his team. To facilitate open dialogue with his staff and empower people to speak up, he models this behavior to create a culture of transparency. "I always feel that my vision, especially in times of change, is something I bring as an idea to the group to get feedback. Then it can incorporate others' ideas and be refined. The result is a more collaborative vision. Sometimes it becomes totally different than what I started with." In his view, to ask and listen to the concerns and opinions of his staff at the beginning leads to a more polished and accepted result once the decision has been agreed upon.

One of the things that Jacob emphasizes about communication is each person's role in speaking up to voice their opinion. However, Jacob is also mindful that not everyone feels comfortable in situations where there is disagreement or conflict of opinions. Jacob recalls a disagreement during a meeting with a community partner. "I was initially floored that our staff had held back, and then came to realize the meeting space had not felt safe enough for staff to openly participate. We talked about the meeting and their feelings, and I realized that for this partnership to work, I needed to foster a norm of speaking up within my organization." Jacob worked with the community partner to co-create a norm of speaking up in the moment when problems arose. Jacob also shared with the partner the possibility of "missed opportunities when they shut down the conversation" by speaking aggressively.

There is a cost of not bringing things up in the moment. Although there may not be a specific loss of money, there can be a loss of time, energy and input when an effort isn't made to hear the voices of all key constituents. By making this a focus of his leadership style, Jacob empowers his staff and improves his organization's ability to strategically plan the delivery of HIV and health services.

For these reasons, APIAHF appreciates Jacob Smith Yang as an exceptional leader for his efforts at Empowering Others to Act.

# Micha Suarez

## ENCOURAGES THE HEART

by Mazdak Mazarei

APIAHF

Tackling the factors that lead to the spread of HIV takes time, energy and passion. As with any complex struggle, the road to success is long and the victories can seem distant. It comes as no surprise that many leaders in HIV prevention face the challenge of keeping their colleagues invested in the movement.

**MICHA SUAREZ**, a member of the County of San Diego HIV Prevention Community Planning Board and a participant in APIAHF's Fostering Advocacy and Community Empowerment Skills (FACES) training series, explains, "People get burned out, bitter or forget why they got involved in the first place. It is important to encourage the heart to ensure that people are reminded of their passion, the fire that first lit up that inspired them to get involved in the community planning group (CPG) in the first place."

Leaders like Micha encourage the heart of their groups through simple acts like recognizing the contributions of individuals towards team victories and celebrating

collective accomplishments. Micha even found a way to use her love of baking to help boost her CPG's spirits. Her now famous Deconstructed Peanut Butter and Jelly cookies served as the perfect precursor to group bonding after a meeting. Because of the cookies, Micha remembers, "Rather than leaving immediately, I actually stayed quite a bit longer to talk to other steering committee members, which was something I had not done before. The impromptu social hour was great because it gave me a chance to get to know the steering committee members a little better; something which I'm sure will only make things better in the CPG in the future."

Memories of times like these can help groups sustain their momentum when things get tough. As Micha clarifies about the importance of encouraging the heart, "Even though we are faced with many obstacles, stigma, lack of funding, bad data and other things that the mind can give up on — a passionate heart trudges on and keeps fighting."

For her achievements as a community leader in the fight against HIV (as well as for those fabulous Deconstructed Peanut Butter and Jelly Cookies), APIAHF is proud to acknowledge Micha Suarez for Encouraging the Heart.

**FAVORITE FOOD:** "In an ideal world the three main food groups would be **chicken, cheese and chocolate**. I love those 3 Cs so much! Perhaps one of these days I'll concoct a culinary masterpiece that marries those 3 ingredients perfectly."

[Editor's Note: APIAHF staff has let Micha know about the wonder that is Chicken Mole Enchiladas, so her dream has come true.]

*"My mind tells me to give up,  
but my heart won't let me."*



Photo courtesy of Micha Suarez

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# SUKI TERADA PORTS

## Food for Thought 2008 Honoree

*Suki is a rarity in every sense because of her longevity in advocacy, her passion, her accomplishments, and her leadership in inspiring so many to work collectively in achieving a vision of fairness for all.*

— SUMON CHIN, Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc.

"Last year when I was in New York City, Suki gave me an extraordinary tour of Harlem. Filled with humorous stories of her childhood, conversations with neighbors and insights of the social problems all our communities face, the experience showed me a leader who not only tirelessly advocates for social justice issues, but also creates the deep personal connections needed to sustain long-term change. Through sharing her life with others, Suki has empowered me and countless others to impart truths, to speak wisely (and loudly when needed), to provide mentorship and most importantly of all, to have a wicked sense of humor about life."

— VIVIAN HUANG, Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality

"Suki is constantly challenging the process as she refuses to let issues disappear. Her physical actions have often become the folklore of younger activists: climbing into a backhoe to save Morningside Park, strong-arming the Department of Education to include bathrooms in elementary school classrooms, walking through Harlem to find a place to support women with HIV and storming the stage at a meeting to get CDC to include Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and Native Americans in data collection systems. These examples also inspire me to action and challenge my perception of who she is."

— KEVIN HUANG, New York State HIV Prevention Planning Group

"For so many years - and for so many of us - Suki has been a powerful and persistent advocate for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, for women, for gay men, for persons living with HIV/AIDS. She is usually the first - and always the last - person to raise her hand, stand up, and give voice to both the challenges and the opportunities faced by those who are often invisible, overlooked or ignored. We all are deeply grateful for Suki's tireless advocacy, mentorship and leadership - thank you, Suki!"

— IGNATIUS BAU, The California Endowment

"Suki is at the heart of our movement for social justice. Suki truly believes that we can change society to be more fair and just. She has always made the time to listen, talk story and give advice to me with humor and wisdom. With those gifts, I have always left feeling more confident, powerful and hopeful."

— MANCHUI LEUNG, APIAHF

SUKI TERADA PORTS has been an HIV/AIDS activist since the beginning of the epidemic. She has helped create organizations that serve communities of color and women, such as Family Health Project, the Asian and Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS, the National Minority Task Force on AIDS, Iris House and Voices of Women of Color Against HIV/AIDS. She is as fierce as she is funny, and as we move through the third decade of HIV/AIDS and continue to experience growing health disparities in the U.S., Suki remains a model and an inspiration for activism in the health and social justice movement.