



ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION OF THE GREATER WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA, INC.

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Celebrating Over Twenty-Five Years of Professional and Community Service

1981 - 2007

APABA-DC President's Address



It is an honor to serve as President of APABA-DC this year, and I am excited about what we will achieve during the 2007-2008 term. The year has already begun on a high note, with a successful, well-attended installation dinner. Only with vision, dedication, and hard work, can we match and surpass the extraordinary accomplishments of last year. Fortunately, APABA-DC flourished under the leadership of John Truong, our Immediate Past President, which will make the path forward clearer and less difficult to travel. Under John's leadership, APABA-DC made great strides, including a new website, an increase in active membership, a successful minority judicial clerkship conference, and the formation of our Government Attorneys Forum.

My vision for this year is to ensure that APABA-DC maintains and increases its relevance to you. This vision has two key components -- providing meaningful services in order to retain and attract members and ensuring that APABA-DC achieves its mission of advancing the interests of APA attorneys.

I am pleased to report that we have already made strides in both areas. With respect to improving the services we provide, we have undertaken two major initiatives to date. First, we recently held a town hall meeting, where members and potential members had the opportunity to meet the entire board, hear about our plans for this year, and provide us with feedback. I hope that you continue throughout the year to support us by providing us with your suggestions for activities, programming, and areas for improvement. We can only reach our full potential with your input.

Second, we have begun to lay the groundwork for APABA-DC's In-House Counsel group, which will hopefully enjoy as much success as NAPABA's in-house initiative. Two of our in-house attorney members, Ben Roca and May Lee, are spearheading this effort, which includes creating a committee, canvassing members and potential members, and drafting a mission statement. The in-house group will hold its inaugural event in the spring.

To advance the interests of APA attorneys, I have chosen to focus on diversity. While APA attorneys have undoubtedly enjoyed success, there are no APA judges in Washington, D.C. either at the local or federal level. APABA-DC hopes to raise awareness about this issue by holding a panel discussion on navigating the D.C. judicial selection process and the importance of diversity on the bench.

Yet another place where minority attorneys are underrepresented is at the upper ranks of major law firms. This is a matter of racial equity because an organization's

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diversity tells us how successful it has been in welcoming and mentoring diverse attorneys. If a law firm cannot retain its diverse attorneys, then those attorneys have lost out on the opportunity to obtain coveted positions of influence and power both inside and outside their law firms. Their absence, in turn, deprives junior minority attorneys of a valuable source of mentorship, making their own attrition more likely, creating a vicious cycle.

Obviously, diversity is, in many respects, at the forefront of the DC legal community's consciousness. We are fortunate to practice law in a city in which legal employers maintain a high level of awareness of the importance of diversity, as evidenced by their support of minority bar associations, formation of diversity committees, and redoubled minority recruitment efforts. However, according to a 2006 statistic based on a nationwide survey of 240 firms, 11.4% of all attorneys were minorities, but only 5% of the partners at those law firms were minorities. This issue greatly affects APA attorneys. We therefore would be naïve in thinking somehow, that DC, one of the largest legal markets in the country, does not reflect the same issues nationally. However, the extent of the problem is unknown in Washington, D.C. While other legal markets have undertaken studies to determine the success of law firms in retaining their minority talent, Washington, D.C. has not done so.



APABA-DC's Townhall Meeting held on November 29, 2007

My hope is that APABA-DC would become directly involved in remedying this situation. This means moving the focus beyond how many minority and first-year and junior associates a firm can initially attract, or whether a firm has established a diversity committee, but by critically examining minority attorney attrition rates. To that end, I would like to undertake a study with the other local minority bar associations that will critically examine DC law firm leadership in the following areas: How many minority partners does a law firm have? How many of those partners are equity partners? How many of them were promoted from within to partner, one of the truest testaments to a law firm's diversity efforts? How many of those partners hold positions of leadership in the firm aside from chairing the diversity committee? How is desirable work assigned? Is the firm tracking attrition and promotion rates for minority versus non-minority attorneys?

We have already begun dialogue with local minority bar associations on this initiative and have received positive responses. My hope is that the answers to these questions will provide a clearer picture of how D.C. law firms, which have already expressed a sincere desire to achieve real diversity, are really doing, and will therefore move us one step closer to achieving justice within a profession that is dedicated to justice.

I am optimistic that APABA-DC can make great progress this year in working towards the goals that I have outlined. The level of commitment, vision, and energy of APABA-DC's 2007-08 Board of Directors and the wonderful legacy left to us by our previous leaders gives me great confidence that we will succeed.

Leah E. Frazier

APABA-DC 2007-2008 Board Members



Board 2007-2008



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Rosy Lor
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Ex officio

APABA-DC 2007-2008 Board Members 2007-2008 APABA-DC Installation Dinner



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Resource Committee



Ben Roca
Co-chair, In-House Counsel Forum



Daniel Song
Co-chair, Practicing Attorney
Resources Committee (PAR)



Grace Wu
Co-chair, Women's Forum



May Lee
Co-chair, In-House Counsel Forum

2007 - 2008 APABA-DC Installation Dinner

On September 26, 2007, members and friends of APABA-DC gathered at the National Press Club for APABA-DC's annual Installation Dinner.

In his opening remarks acknowledging the outgoing Board members, Immediate Past President John Truong recounted the extraordinary challenges faced by the 2006-2007 Board due to the untimely death of Robert Wone last year shortly before he was to be sworn in as President of APABA-DC. John noted that despite the sadness and turmoil experienced by the Board and the Asian Pacific American legal community following Robert's still unsolved murder, the Board pulled together and made 2006-2007 a year of great achievements for APABA-DC. The cited accomplishments of 2006-2007 included the annual Judicial Clerkship and Internship Conference, which has been renamed in Robert's memory; the formation of a Government Attorneys Forum; the Speed Networking; and numerous community service and career development events.

2007-2008 APABA-DC Installation Dinner, continued



The Honorable Ricardo M. Urbina

As one example of the many highlights of the past year, John captivated the audience with stories about APABA-DC's participation in the annual DC Dragon Boat race held on May 18-19, 2007. While describing the fledgling APABA-DC team's effort to "reach" with every stroke during the race as a metaphor for APABA-DC's activities over the past year to reach out to more and more members of the local Asian Pacific American community, his enthusiasm filled the room. In appreciation of John's leadership, the 2006-2007 Board presented him with a framed poster-size photograph showing his exuberant leap into the air upon hearing that the APABA-DC boat did not finish last.

The keynote speaker, the Honorable Ricardo M. Urbina of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, was introduced by John,

one of his former clerks, as "the man in the bathrobe and the man in the black robe." The audience listened in rapt silence to Judge Urbina's thought-provoking speech about the role judges play in a democracy, and the moral and philosophical questions faced by judges as they make their decisions, especially in cases involving protecting the rights of minorities. For the fifth consecutive year, the Honorable Eric T. Washington, Chief Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, administered the oath of office to the incoming Board members. Both Judge Urbina and Chief Judge Washington were presented with plaques commemorating their longstanding commitment to APABA-DC.

Finally, 2007-2008 President Leah Frazier shared with the audience her vision for the coming year. In addition to continuing the successes of last year, she plans to establish an in-house counsel forum, hold a town-hall style meeting to solicit greater feedback from the APABA-DC membership, and work to address the issue of retention by large law firms of Asian Pacific American attorneys and other attorneys of color.

APABA-DC gratefully acknowledges the support of the law firms and businesses that sponsored the Installation Dinner, without whose generosity events such as this would not be possible. APABA-DC was also pleased to welcome as honored guests Bill and Aimee Won, the parents of the late Robert Wone. In addition to Judge Urbina and Chief Judge Washington, other members of the federal and local judiciary who attended the dinner included the Honorable Brian Kim; the Honorable Jeannie Hong; and the Honorable Marisa Demeo. Leaders of several voluntary bar associations also attended the dinner, including Lorelie Masters, President of the Women's Bar Association of DC; Neal Seth, President of the South Asian Bar Association of DC; Loretta Garcia, President-Elect of the Hispanic Bar Association of DC; and Les Jin, the Executive Director of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association.

Government Attorneys' Forum APABA-DC's New and Improved Website

Government Attorneys Forum

APABA-DC established the Government Attorneys Forum this year in order to address the needs of many of our members who work for the federal government. The mission of the Government Attorneys Forum is to encourage and support APA attorneys at all levels of the federal and local governments, cultivate an understanding of the issues facing APA government attorneys, promote the value of public service, increase the representation of APA attorneys in all branches of government, and further their advancement, by providing substantive legal programming, career advice seminars, and social and networking opportunities. Events included an inaugural networking event, on January 23, 2007, which featured guest speaker Judge Brian G. Kim of the District Court of Maryland, a networking event with our friends at the Korean American Coalition on April 4, 2007, and networking events on July 26, 2007 and November 14, 2007. Anticipated 2008 events include a panel on transitioning from law firm to government practice, a discussion on the EEOC's investigation of glass ceiling problems of Asian American federal employees, a discussion on the roles and obligations of government attorneys, as well as distinguished speaker series dinners and networking events.

APABA-DC's New and Improved Website

Over the past year, APABA-DC has been working hard to improve its website (www.apaba-dc.org). Much of the work completed so far has gone into improving the site's functionality and integrating a member-accessible online membership database. There is still a lot of work to do, but we encourage each member to visit the website and explore the many new functions available.

After registering on the website, current and prospective members will be able to administer their APABA-DC memberships completely online in a secure and password-protected environment. The website allows users to do any of the following online:

- Apply for membership;
- Renew memberships;
- Pay for membership fees online via credit card;
- View and update the member's own contact information;
- Specify what contact information is viewable by other members; and
- Access an up-to-date online directory of members.

The website also provides new ways to stay current on APABA-DC activities and keep in touch with other members, including:

- An online events calendar listing upcoming APABA-DC and other events of interests to members.
 - If the event requires a fee, members will be able to register and pay for the event online.
- Bulletin boards and forums on topics of interests to members where users can post questions, thoughts, and comments and get responses from other members.

Work on the APABA-DC website is continuing, and we ask for your feedback on what other functions you would like to see on the website and what we can do to improve your experience on the site. If you have comments on the website or would like to volunteer to help us improve the site, please send an email to Khouane Ditthavong, VP of Communications, at communications@apaba-dc.org.

APABA-DC Board Amends By-Laws

The APABA-DC Board voted to amend the APABA-DC by-laws to better address succession procedures in the event of a vacancy in the office of the President. The Board realized the need to provide clearer procedures after the unexpected passing of APABA-DC President, Robert Wone, in 2006. Under the approved by-law amendments, in the event APABA-DC's President is unable to serve as such, the President-Elect will become President and a special election will be called to elect a new President-Elect. The Board believes that it is important for APABA-DC's members to have a role in choosing the President-Elect, given the importance and prominence of that office.

The Board also voted to amend the by-laws to provide that the Board may, by majority vote, take action via e-mail or written consent. Previously, the by-laws required unanimous consent.

Women's Forum

The goal of the Women's Forum is to further develop a network of Asian American female attorneys in order to become successful professionally, and to provide guidance and leadership within our communities. We plan on achieving these goals through a series of networking, educational, social, volunteer, and community outreach programs. We had a Kick-Off Happy Hour at Gordon Biersch in September to meet members. In October, we invited members to attend a program hosted by the National Museum of the American Indian in which two authors spoke about their recently published novels, both of which highlighted the Asian American experience in the 19th century. We recently held a Committee meeting and are planning the following events for next year: speaker presentation on interviewing practice tips for lateral candidates and law students; panel discussion on immigration issues; a self-defense workshop; dinner series on work/life balance, as well as additional happy hours so members can network in an informal setting.

Programs

APABA-DC and SABA-DC held a Joint Networking Happy Hour on October 4, 2007. It was held at Mezza Luna where over 40 attendees enjoyed SA-PABA-tinis.

APABA-DC held its Annual Holiday Dinner on December 11, 2007 at Gordon Biersch. It was also the Kick-Off event for the holiday toy drive benefitting the youth of the Vietnamese American Community Service Center (VACSC).

APABA-DC Gets into the Halloween Spirit



On October 20, 2007, APABA-DC members picked pumpkins, visited the farmer's market at Butler's Orchard, and enjoyed homemade pumpkin pie and apple cider. Annette Kwok won the pumpkin carving contest.



Immediate Past President's Address at the 2007 APABA-DC Installation Dinner National Press Club - September 26, 2007

Eleven months ago, I stood before you with sorrow in our hearts because we had recently mourned the loss of one of our best and brightest members, one of our leaders—Robert Wone.

It has been a humbling experience to lead our organization in this past year. We have done so much in the past 11 months. One of the prouder moments during my tenure as President was our participation in the D.C. Annual Dragon Boat Race in May 2007.

The Dragon Boat Festival commemorates the popular Chinese patriot, Chu Yuan. In the 3rd century, in protest of a corrupt government, Chu Yuan threw himself into the Mi Lo River in despair. Upon hearing the news, local people frantically raced out in boats to save him, and to scare away any fish who might want to eat him. The villagers pounded drums and threw rice into the river - but, sadly, they arrived too late. As legend has it, boat races and ceremonial sacrifices of rice were performed each year to symbolize the frantic attempts to rescue Qu Yuan.



APABA-DC's Dragon Boat Festival Team

Each dragon boat has 20 rowers, 10 on each side of the boat and we follow the beat of our drummer. The rowers have to reach forward in unison to maximize the surge of the boat. The further forward we reach, when we pull back the paddles, the more the boat surges ahead. Given the technique, all rowers have to work in unison; if not, then we are just fighting against each other. Even though we are lawyers and, therefore, not exactly in our top physical form, we rowed nevertheless and competed with better and younger teams. We competed in four races over two days. During each race, as we got closer to the finish line, usually toward the end of the pack, our muscles were aching and we were out of breath. At that moment, we needed to reach forward even further to make sure that our boat

continued to surge ahead. Inevitably, one of us would yell out to the rest of the team, "REACH, REACH!" When that rower got tired, someone else would pick up the rallying cry and yell, "REACH, REACH!" Eventually, the entire team would yell, "REACH, REACH!" in unison to encourage the team to give its all until the end.

Our teamwork during the Dragon Boat race was symbolic of the effort of the 2006-07 APABA-DC Board. From the beginning, the entire Board reached to achieve our mission, to serve our members, to serve our community, and also to ensure that the future generation has a stronger organization upon which to build. Some of the programs that we offered this past year showed that as a team, we reached in unison to make sure that APABA-DC surged ahead.

For instance, Leah Frazier and May Lee, co-chairs of the Practicing Attorney Resource committee, organized an event on what is commonly known as "the bamboo ceiling," referring to the dearth of APAs in upper management positions, and how to break that ceiling.

Rosy Lor and Elizabeth Lee, co-chairs of the Women's Forum, organized discussions on the retention and advancement of minority women in law firms. The Women's Forum also held a panel discussion on Asian Women in criminal law, a field not traditionally associated with Asian American women.

Marita Etcubañez, our Vice President for Community Affairs, made sure that we did not lose sight on our commitment to serving our community by organizing an APABA-DC Servathon team, which worked to improve the George Mason park. She also organized a Halloween celebration for underprivileged children in the District of Columbia.

Immediate Past President's Address Installation Dinner, continued

That Halloween celebration would not have happened without a generous donation from Khouane Dittavong, our Vice President for Communications. In his spare time, Khouane ensured that news of APABA-DC events reached our members. He was also instrumental in dragging us into the 21st century by improving our website, which features online enrollment services, an event calendar, and a membership directory.

Woo Lee, our Vice President for Programs, was the force behind APABA-DC's inaugural participation in the Dragon Boat race. Although we blamed him for our inability to move our arms for a week after the race, we all appreciated the opportunity to participate in the race. That weekend defined the character of the 2006-07 Board, its commitment to the mission of our organization, and increased our visibility outside of the legal community.

Sanya Sukduang, our Secretary and one of the longest serving members on the Board, was a lifeline for the Board because of his institutional knowledge of APABA-DC. He ensured that, as we reached, we never strayed from our mission.

Speaking of serving our mission and members, this year we created the Government Attorneys Forum, with David Hsu as the first chair of that committee. This committee was long overdue because of the large percentage of our membership who work for local or federal government agencies.

Of course, none of these events would have succeeded without our members. No one worked harder than Audrey Lee, our Vice President for Membership, to reach out to our members and increase our membership. She single-handedly increased our membership this year. Audrey reached out to law students at all of the local area law schools. She is now in Iraq serving our country, having left a little over one month ago, where she is working to provide "community stabilization." Knowing Audrey, both our armed services and the communities where she works will be better served as a result of her presence.

APABA-DC's good financial health can be traced directly to Tony Lin, our Treasurer. Before Tony took over, we were hovering in the red, but ever since Tony served as Treasurer, we have been in the black.

As with any boat, there must be a captain. Janet Shih Hajek, our immediate past president, served that role well. She is a big sister to all of us and helped steer the organization as it surged forward this past year.

Finally, we have Judge Brian Kim, our NAPABA Southeast Regional Governor, the voice of reason and wisdom on our Board. Judge Kim made sure that when we reached, we did not overreach.

I also want to personally thank two former presidents, Eugene Chay and John Yang, for helping me throughout the year. I thank them for answering my calls and responding to my emails. I think I know how they must have felt every time I called them to seek their insight and input on APABA-DC.

As I leave my position, I look back with pride that the 2006-07 Board pulled together under less than ideal situations to ensure that APABA-DC continued its mission of serving the APA community. I thank all those who had faith in me and gave me the opportunity to lead APABA-DC over this past year.

John C. Truong
President, 2006-07



December 2007 Calendar of Events

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
						1
2	3	4	5 Women's Forum Planning Meeting	6	7 Becky's Fund: Investing in Hope Event	8 D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program/ Advice and Referral Clinic
9	10	11 APABA-DC Holiday Dinner	12	13	14	15
Holiday Toy Drive						
16	17	18 PAR Mentor/ Mentee Reception at Mai Tai	19	20	21	22
Holiday Toy Drive						
23	24	25	26	27	28	29



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