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Manjusha Kulkarni, AAPI Equity Alliance, Receives 2024 James Irvine Foundation Leadership Award

Leader Recognized for Confronting Hate, Discrimination Against AAPI Communities With Data, Partnerships, and Policy Solutions

LOS ANGELES – Recognized for her unwavering dedication to confronting the hate and discrimination that has plagued Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities since the COVID pandemic began, Manjusha P. Kulkarni (Manju), Executive Director of AAPI Equity Alliance (AAPI Equity), received a 2024 Leadership Award from The James Irvine Foundation.

“Manjusha Kulkarni is an innovative leader who has been fighting anti-Asian hate since the dawn of the pandemic, when many were living in fear due to the unprecedented number of attacks,” said Robin Toma, Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations. “She was one of the first people to call attention to these attacks, partnering Stop AAPI Hate partner with our LA vs Hate program in LA to bring an urgent, data-driven approach to address anti-Asian hate.

Becky Monroe, Deputy Director of the California Civil Rights Department, which is the lead agency for CA vs. Hate, said Kulkarni, in her role as the leader of AAPI Equity Alliance, brings a level-headed and methodical approach to her work. “Asian Americans are not a monolithic group – they represent many languages, cultures, and ethnicities,” Monroe said. “Manju and her team at AAPI Equity Alliance know that policy makers and funders need disaggregated data to understand the scope of challenges affecting Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, and AAPI Equity also has the expertise and partnerships in place to effect solutions.”

A nationally recognized leader, Kulkarni leads AAPI Equity’s groundbreaking work in healthcare access, interpersonal violence and mental health. AAPI Equity is a coalition of more than 40 organizations that serve the 1.6 million AAPIs in Los Angeles and beyond, confronting discrimination, fighting mental health disparities, and pushing for legal and policy changes. Kulkarni is also a co-founder of Stop AAPI Hate, a national coalition that collects data and fights racial injustice targeting AAPIs.

“AAPI Equity is proud of this award, which not only recognizes Manju for her work and her expertise, but also provides important funding for our ongoing and critical work in our communities,” said Rachelle Arizmendi, Chair of the Board of Directors for AAPI Equity. The award includes a \$350,000 grant to AAPI Equity, which will help fund the organization’s anti-hate programming.

Prior to joining AAPI Equity, Kulkarni served as Executive Director of South Asian Network (SAN) where she advocated for effective policies on issues impacting the South Asian American community and was Senior Attorney at the National Health Law Program (NHeLP) where she worked to improve health access for low-income communities through administrative and legislative policy advocacy and litigation. She has been recognized as an honoree of the prestigious TIME100 Most Influential People and Bloomberg 50 lists, a recipient of the 2021 Webby Social Movement of the Year award, and a spot on the 2022 Forbes 50 Over 50 list for her leadership in advancing the Stop AAPI Hate movement.

Early in her career, Kulkarni served as pro-bono counsel to secure an apology and redress payment for a group of Japanese Latin Americans who were incarcerated by the United States government during World War II.

The James Irvine Foundation Leadership Awards ceremony was held in Sacramento on Feb. 12, 2024. Kulkarni is recognized alongside eight other leaders for their innovative solutions to pressing issues facing California, including youth justice, college access and completion, teacher preparation and ensuring the health and safety of AAPI, LGBTQ+, and refugee and immigrant populations. The complete list of award winners can be found [here](#).

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AAPI Equity Alliance (AAPI Equity) is a coalition of over 40 community based organizations serving the diverse needs of the 1.6 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles County and beyond. It is dedicated to improving the lives of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders through civic engagement, capacity building, and policy advocacy.