



# Mohawk Valley Latino Association, Inc.

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NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



## UPSTATE LATINO SUMMIT

## 2020-2021 Upstate Latino Summit Part V: Asian Community Workshop

Thursday, September 23, 2021, 9 a.m. - 12 Noon

*"Strengthening the ties between the Latino and Asian communities"*

### AGENDA

#### 9:00 a.m. Welcome/Bienvenida

- Sonia Martinez, Executive Director of the Mohawk Valley Latino Association

#### 9:10 a.m. Keynote speaker

Chair:

- Michael Fondacaro is the Editor of Noticias y/e Notas, a weekly email newsletter covering events in the Latino, Luso, Immigrant and Refugee communities in Upstate New York and New England, which has been sent since 2004, and one of the founders of the Upstate Latino Summit. Mike is a proud Italian Lithuanian American, a graduate of Shenendehowa High School in Clifton Park and the College of St. Rose in Albany, where he earned degrees in Spanish and Public Communications. He has won numerous awards for his work in the Upstate Latino and Asian communities. A lifelong resident of the Capital Region, Mike has spent his entire professional career working in or covering New York State government and politics, starting in 1989 as a reporter/producer at Albany's National Public Radio Affiliate; as a Communications Specialist for the New York State Senate Democratic Conference and currently as a

Compliance Specialist for the New York State Department of Transportation. His volunteer work includes participating in the Festival of Nations and mentoring Asian American students at the University at Albany.

- Natalya Lakhtakia is a speech-language pathologist who has dedicated her career to working in public education. A first generation US American, she is the daughter of an Argentinian mother and an Indian father. She has been passionate about politics since she was a child and has worked on many local electoral campaigns. She was elected to the Saratoga Springs City School District Board of Education in 2019 in a highly politicized race where she was outspent 30 to 1. Natalya is also co-chair of the Capital District Democratic Socialists of America Electoral Committee. She believes we can work together to make a better world for everyone. Natalya is enthusiastic about volunteer work, and is one of the organizers for Saratoga Stronger, a group dedicated to ensuring everyone in Saratoga can enjoy a home-cooked meal once a week.

#### **9:20 a.m. PowerPoint Introduction: Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander Americans in Upstate New York**

- Michael Fondacaro, Editor of Noticias y Notas, and Member of the Asian, Pacific Islander American and Public Affairs Albany Leadership.

#### **9:35 a.m. Panelist Introductions: What was different for the Asian American community during COVID-19**

Panelists:

- Emad Rahim is a Khmer American and survivor of the Cambodian Killing Fields whose life was turned into the short award-winning documentary "*Against the Odds*." He has been featured in the Huffington Post, Rutgers' The Humanist, Forbes, CEO Magazine, WorldClass Magazine, The Post Standard and covered by BBC and NPR. Rahim was born in a concentration camp in the Killing Fields of Cambodia. He arrived to the United States with his family as a refugee living in Brooklyn, New York and was raised in Syracuse, NY. After struggling with street violence, gangs, drugs, poverty, family abuse and dyslexia as an adolescent, he found his way through higher education to become an award-winning educator, entrepreneur, author and community leader. Rahim currently serves as the Kotouc Family Endowed Chair and Professor at Bellevue University and Dean of Social Impact at Claremont Lincoln University. He is an award-winning entrepreneur, educator, Fulbright

Recipient and TEDx Speaker. He was the former Dean at Colorado Tech and Strayer University, Entrepreneur-in-Residence at Oklahoma State University and Syracuse University, and Visiting Scholar at Rutgers University.

- Sibu Nair is the founder and Executive Director of CHAI (Council of Heritage and Arts of India, Inc), in which he has been involved since 2018. Prior to that, he had been involved in the Indian American community in various capacities since 2010. He is a visionary who understands the importance of preserving the heritage and rich culture from India. He was the past president of India Association of Buffalo. While he was the president of IAB, he was able to secure the first cricket ground in Erie County for the community. He initiated and successfully executed “Festival of India” aka “India Mela” on a mega scale with the attendance of more than 3,000 people with the presence of prominent elected officials and delegates from the Indian Consulate for the first time in Buffalo while he was the IAB President. He served as the Vice President of Hindu Cultural Society of WNY in 2018. He strongly believes that our children are our future and it’s his moral obligation to pass this heritage to the future generations.
- Dr. Hp Wang is the Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association’s (APAPA) Albany chapter leader. He has been a community activist and leader of grassroots efforts for decades. In 1997, HP founded GE’s Asian Pacific American Forum (APAF), an affinity organization with 26 chapters and 6000 members. He served as President, Board Chair and Fund-Raising Chair of the Chinese Community Center of the Capital District, New York, President of American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Albany-Mohawk Chapter with 1000 members and more recently as the president of 80-20 Educational Foundation’s Board of Donors. Dr. Wang was a Senior Fellow, the chief technologist among the 800 R&D engineers at Pratt & Whitney before his retirement in 2011. Prior to that, he worked at GE Research as the first principal researcher among hundreds of Chinese Americans and manager for company-wide cost and quality projects, holding this responsibility for years. HP invented, developed, and implemented technologies for product and process development and received over 100 domestic and international patents. He has published 70 papers/reports/book chapters, edited seven international conferences, and supervised two PhD students. A notable mention is the breakthrough technology he invented on gas turbine efficiency improvement for power generation and aircraft engines,

resulting in significant CO2 reduction equivalent to eliminating 30 million cars on the road each year.

- Mimi Lee is the president of Asian/Pacific Islander/American Association (APAA), an educational nonprofit she helped establish in 2003. She was a co-founder of the Rochester Chinese Community Association (1985-1995), where she served as the treasurer, secretary, member of the first community Lion Dance Troupe, performed and taught Chinese Traditional Dance. She was the founding president of the Asia Pacific Exchange employee network at Kodak (1999), where she helped establish a scholarship for AAPI students. She served as a panelist and on the steering committee for the first two Asian Pacific American Leadership Development Programs in partnership with the United Way of Rochester. She was on the Advisory Council for the Memorial Art Gallery Asian Family Day for 22 years, As a heart walk team captain, photographer and company leader for 12 years for the American Heart Association, she received the Volunteer Passion Award. She was a former Board of Contributor and Sounding Board for the Democrat and Chronicle, and was selected as a Reader Judge for the annual Best of Gannett Awards. She has presented and written on the AAPI culture and experience, Asian Eldercare, Asian Storytelling and Crafts.
- Shana Dahlin is a Korean-American adoptee and a long-time resident of Central New York. She got her start as an advocate for the Asian-American community during her years at Ithaca College, which eventually led to her decision to move to her native country of South Korea. After many years overseas, she returned to New York and has continued to use her passion for teaching and activism to help improve the community. Shana currently works for Legal Services of Central New York as a Community Outreach Specialist, focusing on ending childhood lead poisoning through education and policy change.
- Daniel Lapin is a member of the Otsego Board of Representatives whose district encompasses the Fifth and Sixth Wards of the City of Oneonta. Danny was elected to the Otsego County Board of Representatives in 2017. Professionally, Danny is the Environmental Planner Program-helping towns throughout the area with their land-use planning needs. Danny received his national planning certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners in May 2019. Danny serves as the Chairman of the City of Oneonta's Planning Commission and its Housing Commission.

- Cindy Chan Phillips, RD, MS, MBA is a registered dietitian, health communicator, and mother of twin sons. She is currently the owner of Cindy Chan Phillips Nutrition, a nutrition consulting and communications company. Cindy was the Director of Nutrition Education of the non-profit New York Beef Council for 6 years. She received her Master of Science in Nutrition Science from Syracuse University, her MBA in marketing at San Diego State University, and a Chef certificate from Mohawk Valley Community College Hospitality Program. Cindy presented her original research in children's nutrition at the poster session at the Food and Nutrition Convention and Expo 2012. Cindy's articles about important nutrition topics on weight loss, strength development, and food sustainability have been published in The Journal of The Nurse Practitioner Association New York State. Her blogs on healthy eating have been featured on the American Heart Association official blog site. Cindy was known for making science relevant to the public. She was the featured speaker on healthy and mindful eating at various professional conferences, including the New York Medical Group Managed Association, and the New York Nurse Practitioner Association. Cindy is the President of Mohawk Regional Dietetic Association. She was elected to serve on the School Board of Education of New Hartford Central School District. Cindy has experience in both clinical and community nutrition. She was the primary dietitian of the Critical Care Unit at St. Luke's Hospital where she provided medical nutrition therapy and nutrition education for patients.
- Rugmani Kutty is the membership chair for the Southern Tier India Cultural Association (STICA). STICA is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1994, which strives to foster a positive cultural environment through community service, philanthropy and cultural activities. Rugmani has been involved with STICA for more than 15 years but has served as a board member for the past 5 years as an entertainment chair and a membership chair. In addition, Rugmani organizes and performs in various Indian classical dances, Bollywood dances, and folk dances at various community events. She is originally from India and settled in Corning, New York with her family. Rugmani holds a Master's degree in Mathematics from Kerala University (India), and a Master's degree in Computer Science from State University of New York in Binghamton. Currently, she is working as a Principal Systems Engineer for Elbit Systems of America, LLC, an aerospace company in Texas. When she's not working, she enjoys spending time volunteering in the community and maintaining her vast vegetable garden.

**10:25 a.m. Break**

**10:35 a.m. Suggestions for improvement and Q+A**

**11:50 a.m. Closing Remarks & Farewell**

- Michael Fondacaro.