Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are our foundations for innovation and drive our business forward.

Comcast NBCUniversal is proud to support Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC and the American Courage Awards.
On behalf of Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, welcome to the 26th annual American Courage Awards.

Tonight, we are thrilled to be able to once again gather in person and celebrate Asian American trailblazers who relentlessly fight for—and believe in—a fair and equitable America for all. We honor Senator Mazie K. Hirono, who lives and breathes what the American Courage Award stands for. Senator Hirono repeatedly made history and defied odds as the first Asian American woman elected to the Senate, first woman senator from Hawaii, and remains the only immigrant currently serving in the Senate. Her leadership in the Senate led to the historic passage of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, and her fierce advocacy as a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee has helped lead to unprecedented diversity among judicial nominees across the country. She has consistently used her voice to address the major issues regarding civil rights and democracy, and our nation is better for it.

This year’s Changemaker Award goes to Kathleen Kim, an NYC-based producer and principal puppeteer for the Woori Show, which has inspired thousands of children nationwide to be proud of and learn more about Korean culture. She debuted last year as the performer behind Ji-Young, Sesame Street’s first Asian American Muppet character in its 50-year history. Together, Ji-Young and Kathleen have provided much-needed representation for Asian American children and helped facilitate critical conversations with families about the difficult topic of anti-Asian hate.

Parkin Lee has been a constant and an anchor as the Board Chair for Advancing Justice | AAJC through some of the greatest challenges our communities have faced over the years. His commitment to our mission is shown through his unwavering support of AAPI organizations and advocacy to support civil rights in the private sector and beyond. We are elated to present Parkin with the President’s Award for his dedication and service to advancing the civil rights of Asian Americans as a longtime leader and mentor in the Asian American legal community.

Finally, we will announce the recipient of a brand-new award created to honor the lasting legacy of Norman Y. Mineta, a giant in our community who dedicated his life to public service and represented Asian Americans with compassion, fury, and respect. Each year going forward, the Norman Y. Mineta Spirit Award will recognize a young individual or group for carrying the torch lit by Norm through their contributions to advance the civil and human rights of Asian Americans and beyond.

The 2022 American Courage Awards is about championing wins against harmful systems and policies, such as the end to the unjust China Initiative, and blazing forward with new ideas and voices to protect our democracy. It is about mobilizing our communities to come together as we did at the historic National Unity March, and also invigorating our communities month after month, day after day to keep our promise to each other that we will continue showing up and speaking out for as long as it takes. Tonight, we are celebrating each of you—our sponsors, partners, friends, and staff—who fervently defend our democracy at every corner and empower us in our decades-long fight for justice.

We hope you spend some time this evening to meet and congratulate this year’s honorees, (re)connect with friends old and new, and catch a breath while you enjoy the special programming we have planned. You deserve it.

Your partners in justice and solidarity,

John C. Yang
President and Executive Director
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Kim Tran
Board Member
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
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PROGRAM

MASTER OF CEREMONIES
Paolo Montalban
Actor

WELCOME
John C. Yang
President and Executive Director, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

THE PRESIDENT’S AWARD
Parkin Lee
Board Chair, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

THE CHANGEMAKER AWARD
Kathleen Kim
Puppeteer and Producer

THE AMERICAN COURAGE AWARD
Senator Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator, Hawaii

NORMAN Y. MINETA TRIBUTE VIDEO
Footage courtesy of the Mineta Legacy Project

THE NORMAN Y. MINETA SPIRIT AWARD
Tarina Ahuja
Student, Harvard Class of 2024
Co-Founder and Director, Young Khalsa Girls

LIVE FUND A NEED
Jeffrey D. Hsi
Board Member, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Kim Tran
Board Secretary, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

CLOSING REMARKS
Parkin Lee
Board Chair, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Paolo Montalban is a Filipino-American actor best known for his work as Disney’s Prince Christopher in Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Cinderella and Kung Lao in Mortal Kombat: Conquest. He has appeared on Broadway in Pacific Overtures, The King & I, Breakfast at Tiffany’s and in guest and recurring roles on Madam Secretary, Blacklist, and Law & Order: SVU. In the midst of the escalating attacks upon the Asian American community in 2021, he partnered with Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC and Right To Be as a guest facilitator for their joint Bystander Intervention Training.
The President’s Award is a special honor given to individuals and organizations that have been longtime supporters of Advancing Justice | AAJC’s mission to advance civil and human rights for Asian Americans and to build and promote a fair and equitable society for all.

Parkin Lee serves as the Board Chair for Advancing Justice | AAJC. As a longtime leader in the Asian American legal community, Parkin is recognized for his dedication and service to advancing the civil rights of Asian Americans.

Parkin retired at the end of 2019 after serving 12 years as a member of the senior management team at The Rockefeller Group, an owner, developer and manager of high-quality commercial real estate, and a provider of real estate, real estate investment management and telecommunications services to commercial and institutional clients. He led the legal team in the acquisition of majority stakes in TA Realty and Europa Capital, real estate investment management platforms based in Boston and London, respectively, with over $15 billion of AUM, and in the successful launch of The Rockefeller Group’s first U.S. real estate private equity fund.

Previously, Parkin worked at New York Life for over 20 years where he rose to head the legal team supporting the Fixed Income Investment Group, Guaranteed Products, corporate governance, cash management and derivatives. Over the course of his career with New York Life, his responsibilities have included distressed investments, restructurings and bankruptcies, M&A, private equity, venture capital, insurance regulations, and real estate, where he headed the real estate legal team for seven years, including the recession years of the early ‘90s.

Parkin is a graduate of New York University School of Law, which he attended after four years as an engineer designing and testing jet engines for General Electric. His legal career also includes stints at the law firm of Dewey, Ballantine, Bushby, Palmer & Wood and at American Express Company. He has been honored for his activities in support of the APA community by NAPABA, AALDEF, AABANY and the New York Immigration Coalition.

PRESIDENT’S AWARD

PRESIDENT’S AWARD

The Changemaker Award honors an individual, company or organization that is a catalyst for change and whose leadership has inspired action that has led to change on a local or national level that benefits Asian American communities.

Kathleen Kim is a puppeteer and producer based in NYC. She is the performer behind Ji-Young, Sesame Street’s first Asian American Muppet character in its over 50-year history. Ji-Young was created not only in response to the rise in anti-Asian hate in recent years, but also as an addition to the new cast under the Coming Together initiative to teach racial literacy. Kathleen is also the principal puppeteer for Woori Show, a non-profit focused on educating American kids about Korean language and culture. Some of Kim’s other credits include Helpsters on Apple TV+, SNL, the Today Show, Awkwafina is Nora from Queens as Toe-Knee and A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood.

Kathleen Kim
Puppeteer and Producer
Photo Credit: Courtesy Sesame Workshop / Photographer Zach Hyman

Mazie K. Hirono was elected to the Senate in 2012 and sworn in as Hawaii’s first female senator and the country’s first Asian American woman senator. Throughout her time in the Senate, Hirono has fought on behalf of Hawaii families and communities whose voices are not often heard in Congress.

Hirono serves on the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, the Committee on the Judiciary, the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. She is also Chair of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and the Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy.

Born in Fukushima, Japan, Hirono was nearly eight years old when her mother brought her and her siblings to Hawaii to escape an abusive husband and seek a better life. Hirono served in the Hawaii House of Representatives from 1981 to 1994 and earned a reputation as an advocate for consumers and workers. After being elected as Hawaii’s lieutenant governor in 1994, Hirono led efforts to support Hawaii’s tourism industry through visa reform. Voters in Hawaii’s second congressional district elected Hirono to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2006.
The Norman Y. Mineta Spirit Award recognizes a youth advocate whose community-centered leadership has exemplified dedication, compassion, and resilience benefiting Asian Americans on a local or national level.

Tarina Ahuja is a junior at Harvard College dedicated to building just institutions grounded in empathy. Her passions are centered on a desire to uplift the Sikh American voice. She is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the nonprofit Young Khalsa Girls, a grassroots organization founded in 2012 with a mission of empowering young girls to serve their communities through selfless service and advocacy. Through her time she has mentored countless young Sikhs, empowering them to take ownership of their communities guided by the values of Sikhi. She is also the co-founder and president of The Greater Good Initiative, a youth-led, youth-run, national policy think-tank working to write and advocate for policy at the local, state, and federal levels in the sectors of economy, public health, education, civil rights, and environment.

She is the youth ambassador for the National Democratic Institute’s and Running Start’s DISRUPTHER program, an initiative envisioned to increase women’s political participation around the world. She was the youth keynote speaker at the Madeline Albright lunch and the Foreign Policy HerPower Summit in 2019. She has worked with Senator Cory Booker, Delegate Suhas Subramanyam, the National Democratic Institute, and Amnesty International. She is motivated, determined, and driven to be a person of change as demonstrated by her ability to execute international fundraisers raising upwards of $25K for protesting farmers in India and $15K to support survivors of domestic abuse in the South Asian Community through an organization entitled Ashiyaana.

As a community organizer and leader, she helped in the planning and execution of the 10-year anniversary of the shooting at Oak Creek by running a workshop on youth empowerment with the local community. Her work was published in this op-ed (bit.ly/tarinareflections). She was recognized as one of the top 100 Sikhs in the world under 30 and was a TEDX speaker in February 2022 on ‘Radical Empathy Reimagined.’ Additionally, she is an internationally sought out speaker. At Harvard, she currently serves as the Director of Diversity and Outreach for The Institute of Politics, the Captain of Harvard Bhangra, an Undersecretary General for Harvard World Model UN, the Director of Outreach for South Asians in Public Service, the President of Harvard Sikhs, and works at the Harvard Law School’s Immigration and Refugee Clinic.
Thank you for attending this special evening and for helping us to recognize the stalwart and emerging leaders within our community. Our honorees this year come from diverse backgrounds and sectors, but they all share the same goal of protecting and fighting for our rights, our representation, and a better future for all.”
ABOUT US:
Rooted in the dreams of immigrants and inspired by the promise of opportunity, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC (Advancing Justice | AAJC) advocates for an America in which all Americans can benefit equally from, and contribute to, the American dream. Advancing Justice | AAJC is a national 501 (c)(3) nonprofit founded in 1991 in Washington, D.C. Our mission is to advance the civil and human rights for Asian Americans and to build and promote a fair and equitable society for all. Advancing Justice | AAJC is the civil rights voice for the Asian American community—the fastest-growing population in the U.S.—fighting for our civil rights through policy advocacy, education, and litigation. We serve to empower our communities by bringing local and national constituencies together and ensuring Asian Americans are able to participate fully in our democracy.

WHAT WE DO:
STRENGTHEN ROOTS (Immigration & Immigrant Rights; Census & Data Collection; Research; Communications; Telecommunications, Technology & Media; Anti-Profiling & National Security):
By strengthening and expanding federal immigration policies that promote family unification, equal treatment and due process in our immigration system, and integration of Asian immigrants; by ensuring an accurate reflection of Asian Americans within the American landscape in the decennial Census; by increasing the visibility and understanding of Asian Americans as an integral part of the fabric of America through research, communications, and media representation; by safeguarding civil rights in the digital space and promoting universal access to technology and telecommunications services for Asian Americans and other underserved communities; and by providing legal resources and policy advocacy against race-based targeting of immigrant Asian Americans for surveillance and prosecution by the U.S. government.

PROMOTE EQUAL PROTECTION (Legal Advocacy; Anti-Hate Initiative; Education Advocacy):
By ensuring legal protections for Asian Americans and advancing organizational policy goals through litigation, amicus briefs, and partnerships with other civil rights and advocacy organizations; by addressing hate incidents against Asian Americans through documentation, advocacy, and increasing visibility; and by working toward the inclusion of the history of Asian Americans in public education nationwide.

BUILD POLITICAL POWER (Voting Rights; Community Engagement; Youth Engagement):
By increasing the voting power of the Asian American electorate and protecting equal access to the ballot box at local and national levels; by strengthening and expanding the capacity of local community-based organizations to advance and protect the rights of Asian Americans and other communities of color; and by strengthening and expanding student engagement in Asian American civil rights issues and national policy advocacy to advance and protect the rights of Asian Americans and other communities of color.
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The 2022 American Courage Awards Honorees For Their Outstanding Contributions To Promoting and Protecting Asian American and Pacific Islander Civil Rights

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We are grateful for our partnership with Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC and are delighted to sponsor the 2022 American Courage Awards.
Verizon is a proud supporter of AAJC as they continue to advance civil and human rights for Asian Americans.
Thank you for making such a positive impact in our community

Inspiring people and mobilizing resources to address critical issues is a significant achievement. We’re proud to recognize the work your organization does in our community — making a difference in so many people’s lives.

Let’s join together in saluting AAJC’s American Courage Awards 2022.

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We stand with Advancing Justice | AAJC
“Our cultural strength has always been derived from our diversity of understanding and experience.”

— Yo-Yo Ma

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