

A photograph of a natural rock arch made of reddish-brown sandstone. The arch is illuminated by warm, golden light, likely from the setting or rising sun. The background shows a hazy desert landscape with distant mountains under a clear sky. The foreground consists of more rock formations and shadows.

AUGUST 2022

FAPAC-DOI Newsletter

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Contributors

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President's Letter



Dear Chapter Members,

I hope this summer has been treating you well! This July, I had a fortunate opportunity to visit Washington, D.C. - no matter how many times I walk the National Mall,

I'm forever humbled to experience our Nation's capital and proud to have a career as a public servant. In late August, I look forward to some down time and exploring some wild places and national parks. I hope you are all making time to recharge however you need to!

Cheers!

Lena Chang
FAPAC-DOI President



Federal Asian Pacific American Council

FAPAC



FAPAC-DOI Logo Contest

We need a new logo! Help give our organization a new look by designing a logo for FAPAC-DOI. Please reach out to fapacboard@ios.doi.gov by September 30th if interested. No art or graphic design background necessary.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Michiko Squires
Data Scientist
U.S. Geological Survey

How long have you been employed in the federal government?

I got my start with the Federal government and DOI as a Ranger at a National Park in my home state of Florida. I was in a student employment program (called STEP at the time) and juggling that position with my undergraduate studies. That first job is what really opened my eyes to what my path in life could be and helped guide my undergraduate work. While I was there I explored different careers at the same station, and even spent time beneath the waves on a SCUBA dive team at other nearby NPS sites. I had a break in federal employment, but I'm back! My most recent stint with the Federal government is 3 years (and counting...) as a data manager with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and US Geological Survey. It's been rewarding – looking back I realize that these positions with the Federal government have had direct impact on public perspective and the conservation of wild lives and spaces.

When did you join FAPAC? What are some of your favorite things about being a member of FAPAC-DOI?

I joined FAPAC in May 2021. At that time my partner and I had just moved out to California with a remote position, and I was looking for community. I had heard about the organization through my mentor who encouraged me to reach out to Lena Chang. So glad I did! I attended the FAPAC leadership training that summer and was blown away by the representation and diversity within the DOI AAPI community! Although diverse, we all have a commonality bringing us together to better our work lives and enrich our experiences.



How do you enjoy spending your free time?

I like exploring new places! Lately I've been venturing out to discover my own backyard in Northern California. I enjoy photography and documenting the world around me, highlighting some of the overlooked critters and plants. A side passion project of mine is using iNaturalist to learn more about the natural world around me. My partner and I also have a hobby of visiting national parks and wildlife refuges, collecting Jr Ranger badges along the way. Those activity books usually highlight something about the park or refuge that I would have missed!

Do you have any advice to newer employees getting started in their Federal careers?

One of the hardest things to recognize is opportunity when it's in front of you, and easy to identify after the moment has passed. And it's hard to tell if said opportunity will be a source of inspiration, exposure to something you will love, or a chance to learn you definitely don't want to do it again. Lean on your mentors, friends, or FAPAC colleagues when you feel you need some advice!



What else would you like to tell us?

I grew up on a bonsai nursery! My whole family has stayed connected to the Japanese arts including bonsai, origami, and ikebana (art of flower arranging). My obaachan (grandmother) is even famous for it back home in Florida, but that's a story for another time.



MY SUMMER IN REVIEW

Isha Kalia, FAPAC-DOI Intern



My friend recently asked, "Are you excited to be done with your internship?" I stopped for a second, thought about it, and responded, "Excited? Not really..."

Now don't get me wrong, I can't wait to go home and see my friends and family, but interning for FAPAC-DOI has been such a great experience that I am a little sad to leave. Throughout the last nine weeks I have had the opportunity to participate in such a wide variety of activities and meet so many amazing people within the Department of Interior.

From working on the monthly newsletters to planning networking events to of course everyone's favorite, hosting Kahoot, I was able to personalize this internship to the things that I like to do. I really appreciated this flexibility, as it allowed me to learn about public service and the DOI from a fun and engaging lens.

Through this internship, I also began to understand the importance of representation in the workplace. While creating flyers and information packets, I learned that only 2.3% of the Department of Interior is Asian! The DOI ranks last out of all of the Executive Departments. The work being done by FAPAC-DOI is critical to foster a sense of community and belonging within AANHPI employees.

My favorite part about this internship was definitely the people. I am so grateful that everyone I reached out to was willing to take time out of their day to talk to me about their careers and experience with federal government. Having these conversations allowed me to envision a future for myself in public service. A special thank you to Kelly and the rest of the FAPAC-DOI Board for guiding me through the past nine weeks at the DOI.

At the first FAPAC-DOI meeting, I asked for recommendations on things to do in DC. Now that I have spend two months in the city, I want to leave you all with a list of my DC favorites (college student budget edition)!

I hope to see all of you very soon <3

Isha Kalia
FAPAC-DOI Intern



ISHA'S DC BUCKET LIST

- Planet Word Museum
- Falafel Inc in Georgetown
- U.S. Botanical Gardens
- Georgetown Flea Market
- Un je ne sais Quoi Bakery
- Philz Coffee
- MLK Library
- Nationals Game
- The Wharf free events
- National Cathedral
- The Kreeger Museum
- US Navy Band Free Concert
- Capitol Riverfront Yoga

AANHPI

Small Business Spotlight



Located in the vibrant Mission District in San Francisco, Bao is a dedicated dumpling shop serving Dim Sum and an array of Chinese small plates. While you wait in line to be seated, you can watch the chefs delicately and rapidly make the fresh bao that you are about to try. The restaurant also offers a diverse assortment of vegetarian and vegan bao!

"In a city with many great dim sum brunch options, Valencia Street was surprisingly deprived of dumplings. Until now: Enter Bao, a sweet new restaurant on Valencia at 17th, now serving crispy fried hargow, green-tinted wasabi sticky rice, swan puffs filled with mango custard, and coconut milk pudding shaped like bunnies."



- Eater SF

Obon - A Special Remembrance of Mom

Janet Cushing, Deputy Chief USGS

One of the fondest memories I have of my childhood is celebrating Obon every August 13th-15th. Obon is a Japanese Buddhist holiday that commemorates and remembers deceased ancestors. Similar to Mexico's more well known Dia de los Muertos, Obon is not a somber event. Rather, it's a time of celebration, when it's thought that the spirits of one's deceased ancestors visit their living relatives. In Japan, and some parts of the US and other areas around the world with a large Japanese community, it's common to have the Bon Odori (Obon Dance) en masse.



Growing up I remember the evening of August 13th, my mom would slice eggplant that we then ladled onto a fire outside, in a ritual called "mukae-bon." My mom explained that the purpose of this is to create smoke so that our ancestors would be able to find their way to our home. Following that ritual, my mom would spend the next 30 minutes reciting a Buddhist chant at our family butsudon (Buddhist altar). We would also prepare tea and food to place on the altar so that our ancestors would have refreshments. I remember being lulled into a state of calmness smelling the incense and just listening to my mom chanting while keeping time with drumming the mokugyo (a type of Buddhist percussion instrument). Sometimes I would do the drumming or tap the singing bowl. August 14th would involve more chanting, burning incense, and talking with our ancestors. Around sunset on August 15th, we would repeat the eggplant-onto-fire ritual, this time called "okuri-bon," to help our ancestors return to their resting place in the heavens.

This year is the first time that I celebrated Obon since my mom's passing back in March. While I miss her, I felt a sense of joy as I welcomed her spirit and those of my other ancestors to my home; slicing the eggplant and ladling it over the fire that I made brought back those wonderful memories.

Janet Cushing
Deputy Chief
U.S. Geological Survey
National Climate Adaptation Center



My oldest sister inherited the family butsudan, and she shared a photo of it with the rest of the family.

butsudan: a small household Buddhist altar shelf found in many Japanese homes and bearing typically the image of the principal family deity and ancestral name tablets

mokugyo: a wooden drum carved from one piece, usually in the form of a fish, also known as a Chinese temple block or Mokugyo, is a wooden percussion instrument



MY VOW TO BE BETTER

Barbara Green, Equal Opportunity Manager NPS

I relate to Kate. For anyone else who is a fan of the television show “This is Us,” I am referring to Kate Pearson. Chrissy Metz beautifully captures the struggles with emotional eating and I am mesmerized by her performance. I am an emotional eater and have been one for decades. During my childhood when I experienced abject racism, I coped by eating my way through my pain; I relied on food to comfort myself. In middle school, my mother made my clothes since there wasn’t any flattering clothes for a girl my size.



Children can be cruel, and I remember waiting by a bus stop when I was in kindergarten, listening to some classmates taunt me by saying, “Fatty, fatty two by four, couldn’t get through the bathroom door.” My maiden name is Fairbanks, yet those who taunted me about my weight would exclaim “Fatbanks” whenever they saw me. Consequently, I became a loner and books became my friends.

Years ago, I would have never shared this with anyone since struggling with emotional eating was painful for me to grapple with and to manage. As an introvert, I am very private with what I choose to share. However, COVID changed quite a bit for me. I witnessed firsthand those who struggled with their mental health and well-being. I knew I was not alone, since we all have challenges we face and obstacles we try our best to overcome, even during those times when what we contend with seems insurmountable.

In my professional and personal life, I spend quite a bit of time listening to others. I have honed my ability to be an active listener and truly pay attention, versus simply hearing and not absorbing any information shared with me. The past few years have been daunting and there is power and beauty in being there for someone. To extend a helping hand to those in need, to be a shoulder when someone needs one to lean on, and to ask someone, "How are you?" and then showing genuine interest in listening to their response.

It was very healing for me to reach out to a friend who shared the same struggles I do. We were able to commiserate with each other, and then focus on what we needed to do to find better choices to manage our stress and emotional pain. Everyone needs someone to lean on and I am grateful for my friends who lend their capable shoulder for me to rest my weary head on.

I am a staunch advocate for therapy. When I realized I needed more help than I could muster on my own, even with the help of my fearless friends, I chose to seek therapy to help me navigate my way to end the vicious cycle of gaining and losing weight, only to regain what I lost and more. I simply became tired of feeling victorious when I managed to lose some weight, to then feel so utterly defeated when I resorted to overindulging again and gained it all back.

Therapy has helped me immeasurably and I am so much healthier now. I do not diet since diets are restrictive and unsustainable, so I will indulge in a treat now and then. Besides making healthier food choices, I always ensure to walk briskly outside or on a treadmill daily for at least 30 minutes, often surpassing my goal of walking at least 10,000 steps a day. And Alaska is such a breathtakingly beautiful state, so there are many places I have been fortunate to visit, which makes hiking or walking considerably pleasurable.

It has not been an easy journey to focus on my well-being and curb my desire to gorge on chocolate when I am feeling emotionally overwhelmed or managing considerable stress. However, I worked hard and I am extraordinarily proud of myself for finally squelching my desire to feed my emotions and choosing to take a walk, read a book or play with my cat, as a way to cope with disquieting pressure.

As the late Maya Angelou, memoirist, popular poet and ardent civil rights advocate so eloquently said, **“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”** It may have taken decades, yet I am proof it is never too late to make a change. It is never too late to learn, and never too late to do better and to be better, and I vow to be better.

Barbara Green
Equal Opportunity Manager
National Park Service
Alaska Regional Office



SEPTEMBER 2022

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5 Labor Day	6	7 EPA/DOI Recruitment Webinar	8	9	10
11 9/11 Remembrance	12	13	14	15	16	17 Arbaeen (Muslim)
18	19	20	21 NextGen Government Training Summit	22	23 Paryushana (Jain)	24
25 Rosh Hashanah (Judaism)	26 Navratri (Hindu)	27	28	29	30	

September 15th to October 15th – Hispanic Heritage Month

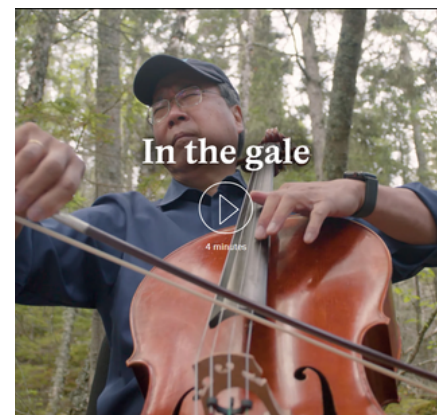
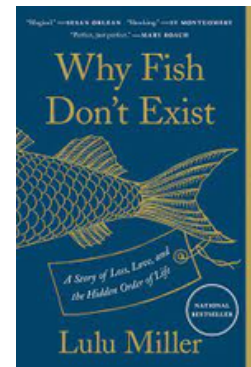
September 17th – Arbaeen: This holy day is observed exclusively by Shia Muslims to mark the end of a forty day mourning period.

September 23rd – Paryushana: This is one of the most important holidays in the Jain religion celebrating spiritual awareness.

September 25th – Rosh Hashanah: The Jewish New Year.

September 26th – Navratri: This nine day Hindu festival celebrates the Goddess Durga.

What Keeps Us Going



The Terminal List, Amazon Prime
Lava, Disney Plus
Obi-Wan Kenobi, Disney Plus
Why Fish Don't Exist, Lulu Miller

Severance, Ling Ma
Eons: Mysteries of Deep Time, PBS
In the gale, Yo-Yo Ma, The Birdsong Project
Paper Girls, Prime Video
Uncharted, Streaming Services