



A Note from the Office of Dean

Leonard M. Baynes

As the University of Houston Law Center recognizes Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month, I invite you to join us in celebrating the rich histories, vibrant cultures, and invaluable contributions of AANHPI communities, especially within the legal profession.

This month offers a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the resilience, advocacy, and leadership that generations of AANHPI individuals have added to the legal field and our national story.

The history of Asians in the United States goes back to the mid-1800s. One of the earliest known immigrants was Manjiro, a 14-year-old Japanese boy rescued by an American whaling ship, came to the U.S., became a translator, and when he returned to Japan, became a samurai. He was one of the first Japanese persons to visit the U.S., an early cross-cultural encounter of Asian Americans in the U.S.

From 1863 to 1869, over 13,000 Chinese laborers played a pivotal role in constructing the Transcontinental Railroad, a project that helped shape America's development, at great human cost. Years later, Jeanie Jew, whose great-grandfather worked on the railroads, became a Capitol Hill staffer and a member of the Organization of Chinese American Women. Her advocacy led to the formal recognition of Asian Americans through Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week, introduced in 1978 by Rep. Norman Y. Mineta. A year later, President Jimmy Carter signed House Joint Resolution 1007, establishing the week-long observance in May to coincide with both Manjiro's arrival and the completion of the railroad.

Following continued efforts throughout the 1980s, AANHPI Heritage Month was officially established in 1992 through Public Law 102-450. The commemoration has since evolved to better reflect the wide range of humanity covered by the AANHPI designation, encompassing communities from East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Pacific Islands, and Native Hawaiian populations.

The history of AANHPI people in the U.S. is one of perseverance, hard work and progress. Few exemplify that spirit more than William Sim (J.D. '69), the first AANHPI graduate of the University of Houston Law Center.



From L to R: May Sim (J.D. '94), William Sim (J.D. '69), Dean Leonard M. Baynes and Troy Sim (J.D. '99) at the UH Law Center.

A veteran of the U.S. military and a longtime immigration attorney, Sim has dedicated his career to helping others realize their dreams. Emigrating from China in 1952, Sim studied at an English boarding school in Hong Kong before moving to Kansas for college. He joined the U.S. Army as a surgical nurse, gaining citizenship after two years of service. He worked as a waiter and door-to-door salesman before settling in Houston in 1958.

After earning a B.S. in Pharmacy from the University of Texas at Austin in 1962, Sim rose to director of sales and marketing for Southeast Asia at a major pharmaceutical company. Encouraged to pursue law, he enrolled at UH Law Center, a decision that transformed his life and career. Sim's two children, May Sim (J.D. '94) and Troy Sim (J.D. '99) also graduated from the Law Center.

Today, Sim still practices law at the Sim Law Office, alongside his son. He has also remained deeply engaged with the Law Center, including service on the advisory board of our Immigration Clinic. A legal pioneer in Houston and a pillar of its growing Asian American community, Sim embodies grit, determination, service and leadership.

I am proud of our AANHPI students, alumni, faculty, and staff whose contributions add to the life of our institution and the legal community at large. Their stories, like Sim's, enrich our classrooms, deepen our understanding of justice, and strengthen our collective future.

I invite you to click on the slide show to see more [AANHPI UH Law](#) Center graduates, law faculty, and administrators who have made a significant impact while at the Law Center, in the world of academia, the legal profession, and society.

Sincerely,

Leonard M. Baynes
Dean, Hugh Roy and Lillie Cranz Cullen
Distinguished Chair, and Professor of Law
University of Houston Law Center

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