

Celebrating Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month: Toyota Employees Share Their Experiences and Reflections

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The month of May is designated as Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month. The event honors and recognizes the numerous contributions and achievements of the AAPI community, as well as their ongoing influence on American history and culture.

At Toyota, diversity and inclusion strengthens the company's position to achieve mobility for all and fulfill its commitment to an ever-better workplace and society. In fact, the mobility company recently ranked fourth on DiversityInc's Top 50 Companies for Diversity. It was also recognized as the second Top Company for Asian Executives and the fourth Top Company for Native American/Pacific Islander Executives.

This year, in appreciation of AAPI Heritage Month, the company is spotlighting three members of the Toyota Asian American Society in Alliance (TAASiA) business partnering group (BPG). They're sharing their views and perspectives on the annual observance and on life at Toyota.

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Fostering a Sense of Belonging

Rachel Jiang, Enterprise Strategy Senior Analyst at Toyota Motor North America (TMNA), joined the company in 2020. Her first role with Toyota was a co-op in project planning management, and, in her current role, she works on understanding and strategically planning for the future of electric vehicles.

Jiang, who was born in the U.S., has stayed close to her Asian roots.

“I’m second-generation Taiwanese American, and so I grew up speaking Mandarin and visiting Taiwan almost every summer,” she says. That’s why when her colleague asked her to help with TAASiA, she happily accepted.

“I first got involved with TAASiA through a co-worker’s invite to join her team in planning for the TAASiA x APIA Scholars mentorship program,” Jiang says. “This opportunity has allowed me to help others in the AAPI community feel proud of their multicultural background so they can reach their highest potential.”

Jiang said she enjoys being a part of the Toyota family and a BPG. It has cultivated a space where she feels appreciated and welcomed.

Jiang adds, “Ever since I joined Toyota, I’ve felt challenged and empowered every single day, which is a work environment I think will be very hard to find anywhere else. Additionally, BPGs like TAASiA have aided in creating a culture where employees feel a sense of belonging, and of being valued and understood.”

When it comes to observing the month, Jiang has big plans. “I plan to celebrate AAPI Heritage Month this year by supporting TAASiA in planning campus-wide events and by attending some local events as well as eating lots of good food!” she says.



Driving Connection and Respect for All

When not working, Nimisha Joshi, senior analyst with Enterprise Planning Solutions at Toyota Financial Services (TFS), enjoys volunteering with TAASiA, teaching art and exploring national parks. Her involvement with TAASiA has left an indelible mark on her life and on her career at Toyota.

“The bonds I’ve created within TAASiA over the years are invaluable,” she says. “This is not only limited to the Plano campus, but also to other chapters of TAASiA.”

Joshi's proud to work for a company that honors and celebrates her culture and background. In addition, it gives her a strong sense of community with deep connections that can never be taken for granted.

"When I joined Toyota, I was ecstatic to learn that we celebrated Diwali on campus," she says. "From then on, Toyota became my extended family, and I developed a strong bond with this team. When we started working from home, I had the privilege to host the first virtual Diwali event in 2020."

The opportunity to organize meaningful events like that and bond with others is what makes AAPI Heritage Month special to Joshi.

"AAPI Heritage Month to me means a celebration of coexistence and a reminder of One Toyota," she says. "We all have our own identity/individuality. However, when we come together, our collective efforts create beautiful art. Similarities help us connect with one another, while our differences offer opportunities to learn from others. These experiences broaden our minds and enrich our lives."



Making a Difference Every Day

Kam Lee's career with Toyota spans nearly 20 years. Throughout his time with the company, he's focused on identifying and addressing vehicle quality and safety issues — often in direct conversation with customers in the field. He started at TABC in Long Beach, CA, Toyota's first manufacturing plant in North America, in 2003 as a production engineer and has been in his current role since 2015.

Lee was born and raised in Hong Kong. He also points to California as the place where he came of age.

“I moved there when I was 16 years old, earned my undergraduate and post-graduate degrees, and lived with my wife there for more than 30 years before we relocated with Toyota to Plano,” he says.

One constant has remained in Lee’s life throughout those personal and professional transitions. “Through it all, I’ve always strived to respect other people,” he says. “And it means a lot to me that this company makes that a priority, too.”

Lee says he enjoys working for a company whose values and priorities align with his own.

“I’ve learned so much over the past 20 years that I’ve been able to apply to make a difference in my day-to-day tasks,” Lee says. “More broadly, I’ve learned that diversity is the key to learning new things, having different perspectives and taking on new challenges without fear.”

He adds, “I also very much appreciate that Toyota makes diversity a priority. We are stronger when we respect people and encourage a broad range of ideas, skills and experiences. That’s what we need to succeed.”