

“Racist” ad pulled as Election Day closes in

Chinese leaders rally behind Bruce Harrell



Bruce Harrell (middle) with supporters at Tai Tung Restaurant on Oct. 24

By Ruth Bayang
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY

SEATTLE — Council President Lorena González pulled a campaign ad on Oct. 25—after calls from local Asian and

Black community leaders to apologize for the video that tangentially linked her opponent Bruce Harrell, a man of Japanese and Black descent, to a white rape survivor.

see **HARRELL** on 5

Sammamish City Council race ruled by growth fears

By Mahlon Meyer
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY



Josh Amato



Amy Lam

More roads or more broadband. That is one of the choices facing voters in the Sammamish City Council race.

At the same time, the choice is emblematic of the competing visions offered by two candidates for the future of their city—one a desire to “protect” the character of the city, the other a pivot to manage the inevitable influx of new residents.

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Senate confirms Tana Lin as US judge in Seattle



Tana Lin

By GENE JOHNSON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEATTLE (AP) — The U.S. Senate on Oct. 21 confirmed civil rights attorney Tana Lin as a federal judge in Seattle.

Lin, the president of the board of the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington, will be the first former public defender and the first Asian American to serve as a federal judge in Washington state, said Democratic Sen. Patty Murray.

“Americans deserve a justice system that will uphold the rights of everyone,

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Unleashing the power of the AAPI vote!



By Janice Nesamani
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY

The 2020 census shows that Washington state has over 470,000 eligible Asian

American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) voters. In King County alone, AAPI citizens of voting age constitute a hefty

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Varun Nikore

“We are starting to see more mainstreaming of AAPIs in the political system and that is a good thing for us.”

**— Varun Nikore
President of the AAPI Victory Fund**

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14% of the electorate which means on Nov. 2, we have a strong say on who enters public office and what causes those officials choose to espouse.

President of the AAPI Victory Fund, Varun Nikore, whose organization aims to mobilize eligible AAPI voters and encourage more AAPIs to run for public office, digs into the data to highlight the inherent strength of the community on the local, state, and national arena.

“In the last national election, the AAPI community closed an almost 15-17 point undervoting gap in almost one election cycle,” Nikore said. “It’s never happened before in the history of our country!”

He points out that less than 0.2% of all philanthropies invest in AAPI causes and the same is true for political causes. “Our estimate shows that less than 0.2% of campaign dollars of the \$14 billion were spent on AAPIs in the previous national election.”

“We still didn’t get invested in during the last election, but we self-organized and over delivered. Certain analysts even credit us for flipping Arizona and Georgia for Joe Biden,” he said.

Off-year elections, like the one on Nov. 2, tend to be bell weathers for federal elections the following year, and Nikore points out that this election will show whether the AAPI voter momentum, that picked up after the wave of anti-Asian hate, will continue to be a factor.

To him, Donald Trump, as well as the signing of very restrictive abortion rights in Texas, are major drivers for AAPI voters.

Nikore sees a national trend with more AAPIs running for mayor, perhaps as a stepping stone, but certainly as a legitimate pathway to public service.

He points out that earlier AAPIs ran for mayor in smaller towns or primarily blue states, but this year, in addition to Bruce Harrell in Seattle, you see Aftab Pureval running for mayor in Cincinnati and Michelle Wu in Boston.

“Their breakthrough speaks volumes to our ability as AAPIs to break through entrenched machine politics and play our own machine politics,” Nikore added. If the first Asian American elected governor on the mainland United States and first Chinese American elected state governor in the U.S., Gary Locke has noticed the large turnout of AAPI voters made the difference in the final outcome of some very close races in the past year.

“It is very encouraging to see greater participation and interest from AAPI voters. It demonstrates we have political power. Knowing that we have political power, we should use it, especially if we care about issues facing our community, region, or nation,” Locke said.

Locke is pleased to see more Asian Americans running for office, whether it’s the school board, city council, members of Congress, or even president of the United States.

“Throughout my eight years in office, I tried to be the most effective and respected governor knowing that if I could, I would have the type of reputation that encouraged more Asian Americans to run for office and make it easier for Asian American candidates,” Locke said.

He feels the divisive rhetoric over the last seven years, especially during the pandemic, made it more legitimate for people to show discriminatory attitudes and disrespect toward AAPIs and that manifested in blatant violence against the AAPI community.

He states that around the time of Covid, the AAPI Hate organization documented around 9,000 reports of violence against Asian Americans in one year.

“The first six months of 2021 equal all of the reports of violence for the year before,” Locke said.

“This has created activism especially among the young, who are demanding action from government officials, that we be treated as loyal American citizens, contributing members who helped create the prosperity and security of the U.S., and not be vilified.”

Locke is pleased to see the activism.

“AAPI voters have to get involved if we care about what is happening in our communities or country. Whether it is anti-Asian violence, having safe streets and sufficient police, smart policing, a good education system, to having opportunities for good pay and nice jobs for our families, we have to make sure we elect people that have these issues and priorities that match ours,” Locke added.

Bruce Harrell, who has set his sights on being Seattle’s next mayor, feels that the spike in violence that Asian Americans recently experienced is certainly not new and familiar to the Black community.

“Data suggests nearly a third of Asians are fearful for their safety because of the anti-Asian hate violence,” Harrell said.

Having grown up in a Japanese and Black family, Harrell said, “When communities are intentional about joining

one another, better understanding their differences, they understand what they have in common and that is when the magic occurs.

“We start frequenting each other’s restaurants, social clubs, and organizations. We start unifying our energy around a common goal and we have so many common goals.”

Harrell finds the partnerships, voter turnout, and civic engagement in the Asian community inspirational.

“Historically, members of the AAPI community thought a wise course of action would be to stay under the radar and simply work hard,” Harrell said. “Their role in political discourse was ambiguous at best.”

Harrell recalls that AAPIs witnessed Executive Order 9066. They remember the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. “They have seen how laws have worked to their detriment and believed that if they were patriotic and worked hard that things would be okay.”

He continued, “Now, they realize the power of the vote and the power of representation and the power of political discourse and this is where good things can happen for all communities.”

Harrell harkens back to when Locke was elected governor and the effect it had on politics.

“Sometimes it takes representation to matter, and I know that my candidacy has excited members of the African and Asian American communities,” Harrell said. “I have been warmly received and am very proud of how these communities have catapulted my visibility in this race.”

Joe Nguyen, the first Vietnamese American elected to the Washington State Senate, whose hat is in the race for King County Executive, feels fortunate to have an AAPI community rich with experiences and talent in Washington, but feels that in order to make sure our voices are prioritized—we need to vote.

“We need leaders who reflect our community and the way for that to happen is to get engaged. It is an honor to serve alongside Representative Thai as the first Vietnamese legislators in Washington state. We may be the first state legislators, but cannot be the last,” Nguyen said. Seeing more AAPIs engaged on issues that are important to the community fills Nguyen with hope.

“Possibly more important than the issues themselves, is proving that we are more powerful than even we could’ve imagined. It’s a shift from feeling as if we’re guests in this country to owning the fact that we belong,” Nguyen added, “My hope is that we continue to grow and build on the work from our elders who came before us to create an inclusive and welcoming state.”

A father to three children, Nguyen believes that the people we elect now as a community will have an impact on our future and our kid’s futures.

“We need leaders who are engaged and willing to do the work in order for our region to grow and prosper. We may not always agree on every issue, but it is important for us to vote and for people who we believe will represent our values.” ■

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THE JASMINE PROJECT

By Meredith Ireland
Simon & Schuster Books, 2021

Things are going well for Jasmine Yap. The Korean American adoptee is about to graduate from high school and in the fall, she’s set to move in with her long-time boyfriend, Paul, and start the nursing program at the local community college. But when she catches Paul cheating, Jasmine’s world is shaken.

While she may be heartbroken, Jasmine’s huge extended Filipino-Italian family thinks this is exactly what she needs—to see that she deserves more and deserves better. The only problem is she’s not willing to meet anyone new. So the family takes it upon themselves to arrange for Jasmine to meet three boys—without realizing she’s being set up. What follows are meet cutes, pre-arranged run-ins, and dates a la “The Bachelorette.”

While the premise of “The Jasmine Project” (the book, as well as her family’s plot) may seem cutesy and silly—and there are definitely those moments—they’re also about a young woman learning her worth, coming into her own, and going after what she wants. Jasmine is a kind, giving, and loving person with a huge heart, but thanks to two incidents in middle school, she doesn’t believe she deserves to be fully loved or to go after her dreams. Her family’s

shenanigans, as high-handed and extreme as they may be, are well intentioned. They just want her to see herself the way they see her.

The story also shows readers what an unhealthy relationship can look like—specifically between two young people. As an adult reader, I could see that Jasmine’s relationship with Paul was going down an abusive path and I appreciated that Ireland included this in a story geared toward young adults, to show them how you should and shouldn’t be treated. It’s a dark topic, but Ireland doesn’t delve into things too deeply, focusing more on how Jasmine feels in and out of the relationship. But it’s enough to get readers thinking, reflecting, and recognizing when something’s not right about the relationship.

THE BAD MUSLIM DISCOUNT

By Syed M. Masood
Doubleday, 2021

In 1995, as fundamentalism began to take root in Pakistan, teenager Anvar Faris and his family—not quite unanimously—decide to leave their home in Karachi to start over in California. When they get there, Anvar’s deeply devout mother and model-Muslim brother are the first to adjust to American life, while Anvar’s more laidback father initially struggles. As for Anvar, he commits to (and takes pride in) being a bad Muslim.

Meanwhile, halfway across the world, a young Safwa is

living in war-torn Baghdad with her grieving, conservative father. Their path to the United States is very different and much more dangerous.

When Anvar and Safwa meet about two decades later, their worlds become intertwined in a way that will shake their community and families to the core.

“Bad Muslim Discount” follows two young Muslims from the 1990s to 2016 as they make their way to the United States from their respective homelands, and their families as well. Despite their different backgrounds and journeys, Anvar and Safwa share one thing in common. From a young age, they often questioned—sometimes just to themselves—the traditions of their cultures, communities, and religion. I really appreciated this as it shows readers you shouldn’t just take things at face value and that you don’t have to do something just because it’s tradition. As we follow Anvar and Safwa’s journeys, we see them become strong adults and more sure of themselves and who they are.

Another thing I enjoyed about this story was how Masood showed readers that—like in any religion and culture—there are different ways to be Muslim. The title of the book may have “Bad Muslim” in it, but what he does here is really show how multifaceted the community and its individual members are. ■

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