



美 洲 同 源 總 會

# Chinese American Citizens Alliance

~ National ~

1044 Stockton Street, San Francisco, California 94108 • Telephone/Fax (415)829-9332

**National Lodge**  
ESTABLISHED 1895

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE: May 11, 2020**

**CONTACT: [info@cacanational.org](mailto:info@cacanational.org)**

## **APAHM 2020: C.A.C.A. Honors the Role of the Chinese in Building the First Transcontinental Railroad**

San Francisco, May 11, 2020 — A major impetus that led to official recognition of Asian Pacific American heritage in the month of May was the completion of the first U.S. Transcontinental Railroad on May 10, 1869, where Chinese railroad workers were the major labor force on the western leg of the total 1,776-mile route that linked the west and east coasts and contributed to America's ascendancy as a world power. Through Congressional and Presidential efforts, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month (APAHM) has become an annual celebration of the achievements and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in the United States.

Last year on Friday, May 10, 2019, thousands journeyed to Golden Spike National Historical Park in Utah and to Washington, D.C. to participate in the celebration of 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. At the site in Utah where the Central Pacific Railroad from Sacramento and the Union Pacific Railroad from Omaha joined together, a railroad spike memorialized the ceremonial completion and the critical role of the Chinese workers. On the same day, in Washington D.C., federal agencies including the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, the Library of Congress, the U.S. Postal Museum, Labor Department and Transportation Department, carried out coordinated memorial activities to mark the significance of the railroad to unifying the American nation. Many celebrants were not only rail enthusiasts who recognized this pivotal moment in American history but descendants of those Chinese laborers who participated in its construction. The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (C.A.C.A.) was represented by its members from nationwide and was a community partner with the Chinese Railroad Workers Descendants Association (CRWDA) in the planning and promotion of last year's conference and festivities in Utah. C.A.C.A. was a driving partner in coordinating the events in Washington that included speeches from Congressional representatives at the Library of Congress.

Although the Chinese railroad workers were praised for their hard work, skills and sacrifice in constructing the railroad, their contribution did little to improve their acceptance in American society in the aftermath of its completion. The Chinese were considered economic competition, and viewed at that time as foreign aliens with appearances, customs and practices incompatible with American values. Chinese Americans continued to work on massive infrastructural projects and in other commercial, professional and industrial areas, but virulent racism and xenophobia brought about the Chinese



美 洲 同 源 總 會

# Chinese American Citizens Alliance

~ National ~

1044 Stockton Street, San Francisco, California 94108 • Telephone/Fax (415)829-9332

## National Lodge

ESTABLISHED 1895

Exclusion Act of 1882, the only Congressional legislation that made a people barred from entry into the U.S. and from becoming American citizen based on race. State and local ordinances further excluded Chinese Americans from economic, educational and civic opportunities and protections.

“We honor these railroad workers for their enterprise and resiliency in the face of extreme climate and geography and public inhospitality,” declared C.A.C.A. National President Melanie Chan. “They truly represented the spirit of the American Dream.”

To learn more about the Chinese role in the construction of the railroad, the U.S. Forest Service officially released a short film to help celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. See “Legacy” about the Summit Tunnel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbeBYUFurnY>. And, to capture the spirit and action of Chinese Americans contributing to this nation, especially in time of distress caused by COVID-19, United Chinese Americans (UCA) launched “Food of Love” national campaign from May 10 to May 24. See how you can contribute to that campaign at <https://ucausa.org/food-of-love/>

# # #

1044 Stockton St.  
San Francisco, CA.

Web: [www.CACAnational.org](http://www.CACAnational.org)  
Chinese American Citizens Alliance

The Chinese American Citizens Alliance, established in 1895, is among the oldest civil rights organizations in the United States. Headquartered in San Francisco with chapter/lodges in Albuquerque (NM), Boston (MA), Chicago (IL), Greater San Gabriel Valley (CA), Greater New York (NY), Houston (TX), Las Vegas (NV), Los Angeles (CA), Mississippi, Oakland (CA), Orange County (CA), Peninsula (CA), Portland (OR), Phoenix (AZ), Sacramento (CA), Salinas (CA), San Antonio (TX), San Francisco (CA), Seattle (WA) and Washington, D.C., the Alliance addresses issues regarding voter education, political participation, racial discrimination and hate crimes, and supports youth leadership training programs and equal employment opportunities for all Chinese Americans.